THE MARINES AND THE GUARDIA NACIONAL DE NICARAGUA 1927-1932.

Brent Leigh Gravatt

Copyright by

Brent Leigh Gravatt

1973

THE MARINES

AND THE

GUARDIA NACIONAL de NICARAGUA

1927-1932

by

Brent Leigh Gravatt

Department of Political Science
Duke University

Author's Note

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily correspond to those of the Departments of the Navy or Defense.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

I. TIPITAPA 5

Rationale for Intervention
Prelude to Tipitapa
The Settlement

II. SANDINO'S REVOLT 37

III. THE NASCENT GUARDIA 47

IV. MISSION IN FLUX 62

V. MILITARY OPERATIONS 79

VI. TRAINING 102

VII. THE TURNOVER 123

VIII. CONCLUSIONS 137

APPENDIX 156

BIBLIOGRAPHY 163

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Trade Statistics 11
2. GN and USMC Forces in the Northern and Central Areas 63
3. Patrol Contacts 64
4. 2nd Brigade Strength, 1929 71
5. GN Force Distribution 75
6. 2nd Brigade Force Distribution, 1929 86
7. Monthly Patrol Contacts for 1929 87
8. Contacts by Area, 1927-1930 93
9. GN Force Distribution, 1931-1932 96
10. Contacts by Area, 1931-1932 99
11. Casualties, 1931-1932 100
12. Enlistments, 1927-1932 109
13. Desertions, 1927-1932 110
14. GN Patrol Contacts, 1927-1932 120
15. Nicaraguan Senior Line Officers 134

Tables in Appendix

1. Estimated Sandinista Force Levels 157
2. Field Companies of the Guardia Nacional . . . 158
3. Total Casualties, 1927-1932 159

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure
1. Organizational Chart, January, 1928 61

Figures in Appendix
1. Map of Nicaragua 161

2. Political/Military Departments of Nicaragua . 162

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua in 1927-1932 sought to bring political stability to a nation which was habitually instable. Legitimate transfers of power simply did not exist. Elections were fraudulent and coups frequent. The American interest in promoting stable government in Nicaragua was occasioned by the proximity of that nation to the Panama Canal and the existence of a suitable alternate canal route through Nicaraguan territory. The decision-makers in Washington feared that instability in Nicaragua might lead to foreign (European) intervention and that such intervention might become permanent, thereby threatening the trans-isthmian passages which were vital to U.S. security and commerce. By engendering legitimate and peaceful transfers of power, the U.S. hoped to remove this threat to its vital interests by creating stable government.

This attempt at institution building was predicated on ensuring fair and free elections. To guarantee such elections, the State Department established the Marine commanded Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua as a non-partisan national constabulary to prevent fraudulent elections and thereby legitimize the change or continuance of those in office. During the Guard's formative period (the Marines assumed

command of the Guard on May 12, 1927), the United States agreed to maintain a military presence in Nicaragua to assist the Guard in keeping order and in supervising the 1928 presidential election. This assistance expanded beyond the anticipated commitment when the U.S. supported governments were opposed by the rebel leader, Augusto C. Sandino.

For nearly two years, the Marines conducted the bulk of combat operations against Sandino's roving insurgents. Then in the spring and summer of 1929, the Marine led Guardia Nacional replaced the Marines in the combat areas and assumed the burden of suppressing the rebellion for the remainder of the intervention. In this endeavor, the Guardia was only moderately successful. The National Guard neither decisively defeated Sandino nor did it contain his forays to the remote regions of Nicaragua. The Guard, however, did maintain the duly elected government in power and did prevent Sandino from severely disrupting normal activity in the populous and economically important areas of the country.

In engagements with the Sandinistas, the Marine officered Guardia performed well. The Marines imparted to their charges the patrol techniques and small unit tactics necessary to counter ambushes and to conduct company size offensive operations. The instruction was, generally, informal. The enlisted Nicaraguan learned the fundamentals of soldiering through the expedient of practical experience. The native junior officer did receive formal training at the

Marine established military academy, but the Marines of the Guard did not provide this training until late in the intervention (more than three-quarters of all academy officers graduated in 1932, the last year of the intervention). For field grade officers, there was no training whatsoever--neither formal nor informal. There were no native officers above the rank of first lieutenant until November, 1932, when the president of Nicaragua appointed captains and field grade officers from civilian life. However, despite these deficiencies, when the last of the Marines and sailors departed Nicaragua on January 2, 1933, they left behind a better trained, better disciplined, and better organized native military establishment than Nicaragua had ever possessed.

The Marine tutelage of the Nicaraguan constabulary was successful in endowing that organization, at least at the enlisted and junior officer level, with a degree of military competency that considerably exceeded the minimal expertise of the previous "national armies." The Marines, however, were not successful in creating a non-partisan military. Given the Nicaraguan political context, an apolitical armed force was probably an impossibility. The State Department admitted as such in 1932 when it agreed to a proposal put forth by the Guard's Marine commander to have the senior officers of the Guard appointed equally from among the members of the two prominent political parties. Implementation of this proposal in November and December of 1932 transformed the Guardia from

a non-partisan organization to a bipartisan one. Under the Guard's native commander, General Anastasio Somoza, the Guardia Nacional quickly became a partisan body enabling General Somoza to be "elected" to the presidency in 1936. The Somoza family has ruled Nicaragua ever since. In the hands of Somoza, the Nicaraguan National Guard did bring stability to Nicaragua but certainly not in the manner envisioned by the State Department. Stability was achieved not through the practice of free elections but through General Somoza's control of organized force.

The Nicaraguan intervention is illustrative of the tenuous nature of foreign imposed "reforms." The reforms, as in the case of Nicaragua, often do not survive beyond the end of the intervention--at least for relatively brief interventions where there is little time for acculturation. The U.S. attempt in Nicaragua to institutionalize peaceful transfers of power through fair and free elections failed as did the attempt to create a non-partisan military. The United States was successful in achieving the objectives of the intervention, stability in Nicaragua and protection of the canal; however, the United States was not successful in changing Nicaraguan politics where continuance in the presidency or accession thereto was accomplished by force rather than by vote. The situation in post-intervention Nicaragua, Somoza and the National Guard, exemplifies the difficulty of imposing permanent change from without.

CHAPTER I

TIPITAPA

Rationale for Intervention

United States Marine Corps involvement in Nicaragua began in 1853 when a Marine landing party from the USS Cyane (22) went ashore at San Juan Del Norte (then Greytown) on March 11 to protect American lives and property.[1] In following years, similar small contingents landed in 1854, 1857 (against the filibuster, William Walker), 1867, 1894, 1896, 1898, and 1899, with battalion and regimental size forces being sent ashore in 1910 and 1912, respectively.[2] From 1913 to 1925, the United States maintained a Legation Guard of approximately 130 men in Managua.[3] The U.S. withdrew this small

---

[1]William M. Miller and John H. Johnstone, A Chronology of the United States Marine Corps, Vol. I: 1775-1934 (Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1965), p. 77.

[2]Ibid., pp. 78-101, 111, 113; and Bernard C. Nalty, The United States Marines in Nicaragua (rev. ed.; Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1961), p. 3. Hereinafter referred to as Marines in Nicaragua.

[3]The Legation's military component was composed of Marine and Navy personnel. From January, 1913, to January, 1917, its numbers were 105 Marines and 3 Navy; and from 1917 to August, 1925, 129 Marines and 3 Navy men were attached to the Legation ("Memorandum for Chief of Naval Operations: U.S. Naval Forces on Shore Duty in Nicaragua, 22 January 1931," located in Alphabetical File "N" at Historical Division, Reference Section, Headquarters, USMC, Washington, D.C.). Material from Alphabetical File "N" will hereinafter be referred to as File "N," HQ, USMC.

force in August, 1925, and for the first time in thirteen years, there were no U.S. troops in Nicaragua. However, this condition proved to be transitory, for the Nicaraguan Civil War of 1926-1927 brought the Marines back in--nearly 3000 of them by May, 1927.[4] The Civil War ended that same May when peace agreements were concluded between the U.S. envoy and the rebel commander at the village of Tipitapa.[5] The American military intervention, however, did not end. United States forces remained in Nicaragua until January 2, 1933.

Why this American involvement with Nicaragua? The prominent factor, which influenced United States relations with all Central American Republics, was an accident of geography--the isthmus.[6] By the twentieth century, the isthmus was important to both the security and commerce of the United States. The construction of the Panama Canal and its opening in 1914 made the isthmus even more important. The significance of the isthmus for the vital interests of the United States resulted in a policy towards the Central American countries

---

[4] Ibid.

[5] Tipitapa is located on the river of the same name which connects Lakes Managua and Nicaragua.

[6] Harold Norman Denny, Dollars for Bullets: The Story of American Rule in Nicaragua (New York: The Dial Press, 1929), pp. 12-15. Hereinafter referred to as Dollars for Bullets; Marvin Goldwert, The Constabulary in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua: Progeny and Legacy of United States Intervention, Latin American Monographs, No. 17 (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1961), p. v. Hereinafter referred to as Constabulary; Robert Debs Heinl, Jr., Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962 (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute, 1962), p. 264. Hereinafter referred to as Soldiers.

that some observers have labeled the "Panama or Isthmian Policy."[7] That policy was relevant to Nicaragua during the first decades of the twentieth century for two reasons: (1) the existence of a suitable canal route through Nicaraguan territory, and (2) the proximity of Nicaragua (and the other Central American states) to the Panama Canal. Briefly stated, the Panama or Isthmian policy sought to promote political stability in Central America (and the Caribbean) based on the following rationale: instability leads to foreign intervention; foreign intervention could result in continuing foreign control; continuing foreign control would be a threat to the existent Panama Canal and to the proposed Nicaragua Canal; such a threat would endanger U.S. security and commerce.[8] Political stability would obviate this chain of events. Hence, the U.S. interest in the internal affairs of the Caribbean and Central American states including, of course, Nicaragua.

Was this chain reaction of "instability to security threat" a realistic possibility in the 1920's? Probably not, but apprehension in Washington that instability in Central American would threaten U.S. control of the trans-isthmian

---

[7]Samuel Flagg Bemis, The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1943), p. 185; Henry L. Stimson, American Policy in Nicaragua (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 105. Hereinafter referred to as American Policy.

[8]Stimson, American Policy, pp. 104-115.

passages resulted in fiscal and political intervention in Central America and for Nicaragua, military intervention.[9] That the canal routes were of strategic importance to the security of the United States is true, for as Alfred T. Mahan succinctly stated: "Halve the fleet, and it is inferior in both oceans."[10] An isthmian canal not under the control of the United States would have done just that--"halve the fleet!" However, it is doubtful that the isthmus was in any danger from European or Japanese intervention in the 1920's By the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, Great Britain had surrendered all its rights to an isthmian canal to the United States. The withdrawal of the British West Indies Squadron from Jamaica in 1904-1905 made the Caribbean a virtual U.S. "lake."[11] These two factors combined with the existence of a

---

[9]Message of the President of the United States to Congress, January 10, 1927, printed in U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1927, Vol. III (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), pp. 297-98. This series hereinafter referred to as Foreign Relations; and Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes in an address delivered to the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Philadelphia, Pa., November 30, 1923, quoted in Denny, Dollars for Bullets, p. 18.

[10]Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Panama Canal and the Distribution of the Fleet," North American Review, CC, No. 706 (1914), p. 410.

[11]E.B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz, eds., Sea Power: A Naval History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 381; Gerald S. Graham, The Politics of Naval Supremacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 123.

"security-community" between the United States and Britain since 1900, or perhaps as early as 1871, reinforced by the Washington Naval Agreements of 1921-22, made unlikely a Caribbean clash in the 1920's between the two principal naval powers.[12] As for the other naval power, Japan, her interests (China and the Western Pacific), trans-oceanic capabilities, and statistical naval inferiority made a threat to the western approaches of the isthmus improbable. In other words, regardless of the varying degrees of political stability (or perhaps more appropriately, instability) of Central American regimes, there simply was not, in the 1920's, any state, European or Asian, that could hope to successfully challenge the United States at its doorstep. This "objective fact" does not discount, of course, what was apparently perceived by American decision-makers at the time--that instability in Central America was a threat to national security and commerce.

What were some of the other factors that caused the United States to intervene militarily in Nicaragua in the late 1920's? William Kamman, in addition to emphasizing the complications arising from the canal routes, suggests the following: (1) U.S. recognition policy, (2) the Monroe Doctrine,

---

[12]Karl W. Deutsch, et al., "Political Community and the North Atlantic Area," in International Political Communities; An Anthology (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 11. In this article, Deutsch defines a security-community to be one in which the members of the community agree that common social problems will be resolved only by "institutionalized procedures without [the] resort to large-scale physical force." (See p. 2).

(3) Mexico, (4) habit, and (5) economics.[13] These causal factors apply to the two phases of the American intervention--the initial landing of Marines in late December, 1926, and early January, 1927, and the period of sustained intervention resulting from obligations assumed by the United States in the Tipitapa agreements. To the initial phase primarily belong the factors of the Monroe Doctrine, Mexico, habit, and economics; and to the second phase, the recognition policy.

The economic importance of Central America to the United States was slight and that of Nicaragua even less. The percent (by value) of U.S. exports and imports to and from Central America (the six republics) during the seven years, 1920-1926, averaged 1.2 percent and 0.9 percent of total U.S. exports and imports, respectively.[14] In Nicaragua, the monetary value of the U.S. economic interest was extremely low. The Nicaraguan debt to U.S. citizens was estimated at $1.2 million in 1928.[15] American capital investment in Nicaragua was among the lowest of U.S. business investments anywhere in

---

[13]William Kamman, A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy Toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 233-34. Hereinafter referred to as Search for Stability.

[14]Data calculated from: "United States Trade with Latin America," Bulletin of the Pan American Union, LII, LIV, LVI, LVIII-LXI (1921-1927); and The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present (Stamford, Conn.: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 537.

[15]New York Times, March 18, 1928, p. 3, quoted in Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 142.

Latin America,[16] and trade, as the following table indicates, was insignificant. For the seven years, 1920-1926, the average percent of U.S. exports going to Nicaragua was 0.11 percent of the total U.S. exports (this accounted for an average 70 percent of all imports into Nicaragua), and the average percent of imports coming from Nicaragua was 0.13 percent of the total U.S. imports (accounting for an average 51 percent of all Nicaraguan exports).

TABLE 1

TRADE STATISTICS

Year	Percent of Total U.S. Exp. Going to Nic.	Percent of Total U.S. Imp. Coming from Nic.	Percent of Total Nic. Exp. Going to U.S.	Percent of Total Nic. Imp. Coming from U.S.
1920	0.11	0.14	74	69
1921	.08	.14	58	68
1922	.10	.09	40	80
1923	.12	.13	49	69
1924	.13	.14	42	71
1925	.14	.14	50	72
1926	0.12	0.13	46	61

Nic. = Nicaragua, Exp. = Exports, Imp. = Imports

Sources: "United States Trade with Latin America, "Bulletin of the Pan American Union, LII, LIV, LVI, LVIII-LXI (1921-1927); The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial Times to the Present (Stamford, Conn.: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 537; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Nicaragua: A Commercial and Economic Survey by Harold Playter and Andrew J. McConnico, Trade Promotion Series No. 54 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 90.

---

[16]Kamman, Search for Stability, pp. 223-24.

Despite this minimal economic significance, the United States considered that it was a duty of government to provide protection for the overseas investments of its citizens--a policy certainly not restricted in its application to Nicaragua alone.[17] The old saw of providing protection for U.S. lives and property, in the case of Nicaragua, was not a pretext for some other motive. The initial landings of American Marines and sailors and the reestablishment of the Legation Guard took place to a great extent for that very reason.[18]

Closely related to the protection of U.S. lives and property was the obligation assumed by the United States in the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine to intervene on behalf of non-American governments to protect their nationals and interests in Latin America. The British, Italian, and Belgian governments requested such action in early

---

[17]In 1931, this policy as it did apply to Nicaragua was considerably modified by Secretary of State Stimson when he announced that the U.S. was limiting the extent of its protection of American property and lives in Nicaragua (Kamman, Search for Stability, pp. 202-07; and The Secretary of State [Stimson] to the Minister in Nicaragua [Hanna], April 16, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, p. 808.).

[18]Letter from Secretary of State to the Secretary of the Navy, December 28, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, pp. 818-19; The Secretary of State (Kellogg) to the Minister in Nicaragua (Eberhardt), January 4, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 287, Message of the President of the United States to Congress, January 10, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 295, 297-98; Eberhardt to Kellogg, June 30, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 440.

January, 1927. The State Department honored these requests.[19] Hence, the landing of American troops on the East Coast of Nicaragua and the reestablishment of the Legation Guard in Managua were due in some measure to the self-imposed imperative announced by President Roosevelt in 1904. That imperative was in turn necessitated by the exclusion provisions of the Monroe Doctrine regarding European interference in Western Hemisphere affairs.

The use of force in Nicaragua (or for that matter in other Central American countries and in the Caribbean) was not a new experience for the United States. Previous military excursions into Nicaragua had been inexpensive in terms of men, money, and material, and they had been of brief duration. For example, the largest earlier intervention (1912) had lasted for only four months, and the one engagement of any significance (Coyotope) resulted in seven American battle deaths.[20] This short intervention ended the revolution then raging in Nicaragua, maintained the government in power, and served to protect American lives and property.[21] A show of force--a gunboat here, a platoon

---

[19]Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 4, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 286; Kellogg to Eberhardt, January 4, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 287; Kellogg to Eberhardt, January 6, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 287; Kellogg to Eberhardt, January 7, 1927, Foreign Relations 1927, III, p. 288; Message of the President of the United States to Congress, January 10, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 295, 297.

[20]Nalty, Marines in Nicaragua, p. 9.

[21]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

of Marines there--had become a standard United States remedy for disturbances in Central America and the Caribbean. Prior to 1926, such action had been successful in restoring order and in providing protection for Americans and their investments. "When Coolidge and Kellogg were confronted with the Nicaraguan situation in 1926, they reluctantly followed a familiar pattern which they felt would quickly stabilize the country."[22] Thus, habit--doing today what one did yesterday--was a factor in the decision to intervene in Nicaragua.

In the eyes of the United States, Mexican recognition of the rebel government did nothing to further peace and stability in Nicaragua.[23] The Mexican involvement in the Nicaraguan affair raised the three-fold problem of prestige, influence, and the "sinister menace of international Bolshevism." U.S. and Mexican counter-recognitions of opposing factions in the Nicaraguan Civil War resulted in "a test of prestige" between the two governments.[24] The State Department perceived the Mexican recognition of the Liberal

---

[22]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 233. This attitude that American intervention would produce peace and stability is evident in the dispatches from the Legation in Nicaragua (See, Eberhardt to Kellogg, December 26, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 818; and Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 4, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 287.).

[23]The United States recognized the Conservative government of President Adolfo Díaz on November 17, 1926. Three weeks later on December 7, 1926, Mexico recognized the opposition Liberal government of Juan B. Sacasa.

[24]Denny, Dollars for Bullets, p. 239.

government as a clear challenge to U.S. influence in Central America.[25] In the past, American recognition or non-recognition had meant the success or failure of new regimes. Mexico had flung the gauntlet and thereby committed the United States to an ever more resolute support of the Conservative government. In the U.S., the "Red scare" of the early 1920's was infectious. There was a Bolshevist behind every lamppost and fire hydrant. Mexico looked Red. The provisions of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 pertaining to land, labor, minerals, and religion combined with the anticlericalism, the land expropriation policy, and the threats to American oil holdings during the Obregón-Calles era made the Mexican government appear, at least, semi-Communistic to many Americans. However, the specter of an insidious red hand reaching out for Central America was either the result of the State Department's overworked imagination; or, more likely, it was a State Department fabrication intended to descredit the Liberals and Mexico.[26] In any event, the acrimonious exchanges between Washington and Mexico City ceased shortly

---

[25]Robert Olds, [Memorandum on the Nicaraguan Situation, January 2, 1927, Department of State, File No. 817.00/5854], quoted in Richard Leroy Millett, "The History of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1966), pp. 116-17. Hereinafter referred to as "Guardia Nacional;" Neill Macaulay, The Sandino Affair (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), pp. 25-26; Denny, Dollars for Bullets, p. 258.

[26]Kamman, Search for Stability, pp. 73-80, passim; Denny, Dollars for Bullets, pp. 243-45, 256.

after they began. The State Department's belief that Mexican "interference" in Nicaraguan affairs threatened the U.S. hegemony in Central America was, thus, another of the causal factors that sent Marines ashore at such exotic places as Pearl Lagoon, Prinzapolca, and Rama in January, 1927.

When the Civil War dragged on through February and March of 1927, the United States decided to force a settlement between the contending parties. President Coolidge sent a personal emissary, Henry L. Stimson, to Nicaragua to end the war. The result was the Tipitapa agreements which ended the Civil War in May. With the conclusion of the fighting, the first phase of the American intervention came to an end, and a much longer phase began. Under the conditions of the Tipitapa Settlements, the U.S. agreed to: (1) supervise the 1928 elections, (2) train a non-partisan constabulary to prevent election irregularities, and (3) maintain U.S. forces in Nicaragua until after the election.[27] The American willingness to assume such extensive obligations was due to the interrelationship between its recognition policy and its overall policy of promoting stability in Central America. U.S. recognition policy toward Central American Republics generally

---

[27]The Personal Representative of the President of the United States in Nicaragua (Stimson) to General Moncada, May 11, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 345-46.

followed the guidelines established in the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1907 which were reiterated in a treaty of the same name in 1923 (neither the U.S. nor Panama signed either treaty).[28] Article II of the 1923 treaty specified that regimes coming to power by coup d' état or other unconstitutional means would not be recognized by the governments of the other Central American Republics. By sponsoring these treaties, the U.S. hoped to encourage legitimate transfers of power, and hence political stability, in Central America. Unfortunately, all elections in Nicaragua were fraudulent. Those in power stayed in power. The only recourse to the opposition was forceful removal. This of course resulted in endemic instability which was contrary to the U.S. policy of promoting stability. Thus, the United States was led to providing supervised, fair elections in Nicaragua in hopes of generating legitimate and peaceful transfers of power--hence, the obligations assumed at Tipitapa and the planned presence of U.S. forces in Nicaragua through November, 1928. This tentative date for withdrawal proved to be somewhat optimistic as the intervention continued until 1933.

---

[28]Although the U.S. was not a party to either treaty, they had been drawn up under American aegis; and while United States adherence to the recognition requirements of the 1907 treaty was not perfect, the United States did abide by the recognition provisions of the 1923 treaty until 1936 (Dana G. Munro, The United States and the Caribbean Area [Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934], pp. 212-13. Hereinafter referred to as U.S. and Caribbean; and Hull to Keena, April 30, 1936, Foreign Relations, 1936, V, pp. 134-48.).

Prelude to Tipitapa

This "Second Nicaraguan Intervention" (the "First" refers to the intervention of 1912) had its antecedents in the Nicaraguan election of 1924. President Diego Manuel Chamorro (an uncle of former President Emiliano Chamorro, 1917-1921) died in office on October 12, 1923. He was succeeded by the Vice-President, Bartolomé Martínez, as interim president for the remainder of the term. Martínez, disqualified by the Nicaraguan Constitution from running for the office of president, and having been warned by the State Department that if elected he would not be recognized, supported the Liberal-Conservative coalition of Carlos Solórzano (a moderate Conservative) and Dr. Juan B. Sacasa (Liberal).[29] The traditional Conservatives supported Emiliano Chamorro, and a Liberal splinter group, the Liberal Republicans, ran Luis Corea.

The 1924 presidential elections were held under the Dodds Electoral Law approved by the Nicaraguan Congress in March, 1923.[30] Of the 115,000 that registered in March, 1924,

---

[29]Hughes to Thurston, May 29, 1924, Foreign Relations, 1924, II, p. 506; Hughes to Thurston, June 5, 1924, Foreign Relations, 1924, II, p. 508; and Thurston to Hughes, June 7, 1924, Foreign Relations, 1924, II, p. 508. For the State Department's acquiescence on the candidacy of Solórzano and Sacasa, see Grew to Thurston, July 16, 1924, Foreign Relations 1924, II, p. 509.

[30]The Nicaraguan government, at the insistence of the U.S. State Department, had invited Dr. Harold W. Dodds to Nicaragua to reform the electoral laws. In this way, the State Department had hoped to remove some of the inequities that had enabled regimes to perpetuate themselves in power.

84,096 made it to the polls in November (the 1920 Census placed the total population at 638,119[31]).[32] The Solórzano-Sacasa coalition received 48,072 votes, Chamorro, 28,760; and the remainder went to Corea.[33] Not withstanding the Dodds Electoral Law, "many of the customary abuses seem to have occurred, and the completion of the electoral process was made possible only by Martínez' arbitrary action in removing the Conservative majority of the National Electoral Board, which had refused to certify the result."[34] With some misgivings, the U.S. recognized President Solórzano's government when it took office on January 1, 1925.[35]

A year before the Solórzano election, the American government had served notice on November 14, 1923, of its desire to withdraw the Legation Guard that had been stationed continuously in Managua since 1913. The inauguration of the

---

[31]Pan American Union, Nicaragua, American Nation Series, No. 14 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 2.

[32]U.S. Department of State, The United States and Nicaragua: A Survey of Relations from 1909 to 1932, Latin American Series, No. 6 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 52. Hereinafter referred to as Survey of Relations.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, p. 245.

[35]Although the State Department was aware of irregularities in the 1924 election, it felt that the United States was not in a position to demand new elections (Hughes to Thurston, December 10, 1924, Foreign Relations, 1924, II, pp. 503-05.).

new administration in 1925 was set as the tentative date of withdrawal. However, on January 7, 1925, President Solórzano formally requested that the Legation Guard be retained pending formation of a non-partisan constabulary.[36] The U.S. interest in the creation of such apolitical military institutions in Central America had been demonstrated earlier by the inclusion of a stipulation in Article II of the Convention for the Limitation of Armaments of 1923 that provided for the establishment of such forces.[37] Hence, the United States honored Solórzano's request, stipulating that the Nicaraguan constabulary be formed in the most expeditious manner. The State Department set a revised withdrawal date of not later than September 1, 1925.[38]

The Nicaraguan Congress passed the enabling legislation for the formation of the Nicaraguan National Guard on May 14, 1925. On June 10, 1925, Major Calvin B. Carter, a former American officer with the Philippine Constabulary, was

---

[36]Thurston to Hughes, January 9, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, pp. 621-22. It is likely that Solórzano, fearful of a Chamorro led Conservative revolt, wished to maintain the stabilizing effect the Legation Guard exerted on Nicaraguan politics (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 72-3.).

[37]The Convention for the Limitation of Armaments (which the U.S. did not sign) and the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 were two of the several formal agreements resulting from the Conference on Central American Affairs held in Washington in 1922-1923 under U.S. sponsorship and supervision.

[38]Hughes to Thurston, January 14, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, pp. 622-24.

hired as the commander of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua.[39] Carter arrived in Managua on July 16, 1925, to find 200 raw recruits awaiting him at Campo de Marte.[40] Of this original 200, 110 passed the physical examination.[41] In August, the force numbered 18 officer cadets and 225 enlisted[42] "about equally divided as to political allegiance [between the Liberals and the Conservatives]."[43] The Nicaraguan regular army, however, continued in existence much to the consternation of the United States. Nevertheless, with the establishment of the Guardia Nacional, with the arrival of the American commander and his assistants, and with the training of the Guard underway, the U.S. withdrew its Legation Guard from Managua on August 1, 1925. The Marines and sailors of the Legation Guard embarked at Corinto on August 4.

Three weeks later on August 28, 1925, at a testimonial dinner given in honor of the Minister of Public Instruction at the International Club in Managua, the assembled foreign guests were introduced, first hand, to Nicaraguan politics. Gabry Rivas, acting under the orders of the commanding officer

---

[39]Goldwert, Constabulary, p. 27.

[40]Millet, "Guardia Nacional," p. 83.

[41]Ibid., p. 84.

[42]Ibid., p. 85.

[43]C.B. Carter, "The Kentucky Feud in Nicaragua," World's Work, LIV, No. 3 (July, 1927), p. 315. Hereinafter referred to as "Kentucky Feud."

of La Loma Fortress,[44] General Alfredo Rivas, arrested several prominent Liberal politicians including the Minister of Finance and the Minister of War, General José María Moncada.[45] Needless to say, the Rivases were Conservatives and were opposed to the coalition cabinet formed by President Solórzano.[46] In exchange for the release of the prisoners held at La Loma and for the return of the fortress to the government, General Rivas demanded the removal of the Liberals from the cabinet.[47] Solórzano acquiesced. In addition, Gabry Rivas received a payment of $2,800, and Alfredo got a house in Managua and $5,000.[48]

To the Americans, Solórzano appeared as a weak, vacillating man. A former businessman, inexperienced in politics, he was, so the Americans believed, dominated by his wife and brothers-in-law.[49] His indecisiveness and precarious hold on

---

[44]La Loma means "small hill," and the fortress was perched, menacingly, on a hill overlooking Managua.

[45]Eberhardt to Kellogg, August 29, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 630; Department of State, Survey of Relations, p. 55.

[46]It is interesting to note that Alfredo Rivas was a brother-in-law of the President. Another brother-in-law, Colonel Luis Rivas, commanded the Nicaraguan army detachment stationed at El Campo de Marte in Managua.

[47]Eberhardt to Kellogg, August 29, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 636; Denny, Dollars for Bullets, p. 207.

[48]Carter, "Kentucky Feud," p. 318; and Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 40.

[49]Eberhardt to Kellogg, September 3, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 637; Carter, "Kentucky Feud," p. 317.

the reins of government were all too apparent to another Conservative, Emiliano Chamorro. In the early morning hours of October 25, 1925, Chamorro struck. Colonel Padillo, a Chamorro confederate, opened the rear gate to La Loma Fortress; and Chamorro's forces, under the ruse of relieving the guard, gained control of La Loma without firing a shot.[50] Chamorro presented his demands to the President the same day: (1) the coalition was to be dissolved, (2) Conservatives were to be placed in all offices, (3) full amnesty was to be granted to all participants in the uprising, (4) payment of $10,000 was to be made to Chamorro, and (5) Chamorro was to be appointed as commander of the armed forces.[51] Solórzano refused to commit the only force he had, Carter's Guardia Nacional, and capitulated on the 26th, meeting all of Chamorro's demands.[52]

Chamorro lost no time in gaining control of the government. As commander of the armed forces, he employed the Guardia Nacional and the army to "calm" the opposition;

---

[50]Carter, "Kentucky Feud," pp. 318-19.

[51]Eberhardt to Kellogg, October 26, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 640.

[52]Ibid. It is doubtful that the Guard would have been very effective--it had no machine-guns and only thirty rounds of rifle ammunition per man. Carter, however, on the night of October 25, on his own initiative stole four machine-guns from the government arsenal in Managua using the same trick that Chamorro had used the night before at La Loma (Carter, "Kentucky Feud," p. 319.).

he forced Vice-President Sacasa to flee to El Salvador in November; he removed eighteen Liberal and moderate Conservatives from Congress, charging fraud in the 1924 elections, and replaced them with his own supporters; a senator from Managua conveniently resigned, and the reconstituted Congress elected Chamorro on January 3 to fill the vacancy; it then impeached Sacasa and delcared the vice-presidency vacant on January 12, 1926, and elected Chamorro on the same day to be the first designate; on January 13, Chamorro became Minister of War; Congress then granted the President an indefinite leave of absence,[53] and appointed Chamorro, as the first designate,[54] to the presidency on January 16, 1926. He assumed office on the 17th.[55] Secretary of State Kellogg notified the Nicaraguan minister to the United States on

---

[53]The Congress accepted Solórzano's resignation on March 14, 1926.

[54]Article 106 of the Constitution of 1911 provides for "emergency candidates"--the first and second designates--for the office of president in the event that both the president and vice-president are unable to perform the duties of that office.

[55]Eberhardt to Kellogg, December 24, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 646; Kellogg to the American Missions in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Salvador, January 7, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 780; Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 11, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, pp. 782-83; Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 13, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 784; Stimson, American Policy, p. 23; and Isaac Joslin Cox, Nicaragua and the United States, 1909-1927 (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1927), p. 778. Hereinafter referred to as Nicaragua and United States.

on January 22 that the U.S. did not recognize the Chamorro regime on the basis that Chamorro's actions had violated the treaty of 1923.

On May 2, 1926, the Liberal revolt began with the landing of an exile army on the East Coast. Soon after, the Liberals, led by Luis Beltrán Sandoval, robbed the National Bank branch at Bluefields of nearly $162 thousand.[56] Chamorro called up 5000 men (plus 200 of Carter's National Guard) to put down the revolt.[57] By the end of May, Conservative forces under General José Solórzano Díaz had regained control over the Caribbean areas.[58] Peace, however, was short. The Liberal rebellion resumed in August on the West Coast and soon spread to the Caribbean Coast. While contained in the West, the pro-Sacasa Liberals managed to sustain the revolt in the East under the leadership of General José María Moncada.[59] Major Carter attributed the new found success of the Sacasa forces to Mexican aid:

> We captured members of the Liberal forces who proved to be Mexican officers. . .[and captured] ammunition containers were marked 'F.N.C.' the national cartridge

---

[56]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 58.

[57]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 100.

[58]Carter gives all the credit to the Guardia Nacional (Carter, "Kentucky Feud," p. 320; also, Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 102.).

[59]Sacasa had not yet returned to Nicaragua. He did so on December 1, 1926.

> company for the Mexican Government, . . .[Furthermore,] Mexicans captured by Chamorro's forces told me that leaves of absence had been granted so that they might come to Nicaragua and make their fortunes by helping place Sacasa in power; . . .[However,] I never saw any real evidence that the Mexican Government was officially involved in the support of Sacasa, though Mexican vessels were landing arms and Liberal troops at various points.[60]

On August 27, 1926, the Secretary of State again informed the Chamorro government that it would not be recognized and urged negotiations with the Liberals to end the Civil War. This warning preceeded the placement on September 15 of an embargo on all arms shipments from the U.S. to Nicaragua.[61]

The opposing factions declared a fifteen day armistice--through the good offices of Admiral Julian Latimer, Commanding Officer, Special Service Squadron--beginning September 23, 1926, to negotiate the problem of the presidency. The peace conference was held at Corinto on the West Coast. At U.S. urging, without formal talks having begun, the truce was extended on October 15 for an additional fifteen days. After the American Charge d' Affaires agreed to preside over the conference, representatives of the two political parties met aboard the cruiser, USS Denver, in Corinto harbor from the 16th to the 24th of October in a last attempt to agree on a provisional president. The Conservatives offered

---

[60]Carter, "Kentucky Feud," p. 321.

[61]The arms restrictions were subsequently "relaxed in December to permit shipments by private firms to the Nicaraguan Government since it was considered unfair to prevent the recognized authorities[now Díaz] from obtaining war supplies when the revolutionists were receiving them in large quantities from Mexican and other sources." (Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, p. 252.).

Adolfo Díaz (a Conservative and former president--May, 1911, to January, 1917) in exchange for the reinstatement of Liberal congressmen and cabinet officers. The Liberals, however, insisted that Sacasa was the legal president. The conference ended, and hostilities resumed on October 30.

In accordance with a previously proclaimed intention made to the American Chargé Dennis, Chamorro resigned the presidency on October 30.[62] The Congress then appointed the second designate, Senator Sebastián Uriza, as president.[63] Uriza, a personal friend of Chamorro's quickly re-appointed Chamorro commander of the armed forces.[64]

The United States refused recognition to Uriza on the same basis that it had refused to recognize Chamorro--election by an illegal Congress.[65] In an effort to obtain U.S. recognition for a Conservative government, Uriza reinstated the eighteen members of Congress dismissed by Chamorro,[66] and

---

[62]Dennis to Kellogg, September 10, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, pp. 791-92.

[63]The first designate was absent in the United States.

[64]Under pressure from the United States, Chamorro submitted his resignation as commander of the armed forces on December 8, 1927; on the 11th, he was appointed Minister to England, France, Spain, Italy, and the Vatican; turned over command of the army on the 15th, and departed for Europe on December 20 (Department of State, Survey of Relations, p. 65.).

[65]Stimson, American Policy, p. 25.

[66]The membership of Congress had been furthered altered by the removal of the Liberal-Conservative coalition members that had been declared elected by the National Board of Elections following Martínez' reorganization of the Board in the 1924 elections. The coalition congressmen were replaced by those Conservatives declared elected by the Board prior to Martínez' action (Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, p. 249.).

on November 11, 1926, Adolfo Díaz was elected as president with 44 votes for, 2 against (cast for Solórzano), and 5 Liberal abstentions.[67] Díaz assumed office on the 14th. On the 17th, the State Department extended recognition.

Díaz' legitimacy was doubtful, but no more so than any other candidate's. Martínez' arbitrary action of removing Conservative members from the Board of Elections in 1924 resulted in the coalition victory of Solórzano and Sacasa. Chamorro, charging fraud in the 1924 election, and probably quite rightly so, re-made Congress in his own likeness. However, his regime could hardly be considered legitimate nor could Uriza's. The reconstituted Conservative Congress that elected Díaz as interim president probably accurately reflected the political status quo ante bellum in that "the party that was in power stayed in power." This doesn't say a great deal for Díaz' legitimacy.[68]

The State Department, in recognizing Díaz, was neither anti-Sacasa nor pro-Díaz; it was merely pragmatic. It would take force to impose Sacasa on an already existent Conservative regime, a course of action rejected in 1925.[69] The

---

[67]Dennis to Kellogg, November 11, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 806; Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, p. 249.

[68]The question of legitimacy is discussed with varying points of view in the following: Cox, Nicaragua and United States, p. 782; Denny, Dollars for Bullets, pp. 238-39; Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, pp. 249-50; and Stimson, American Policy, pp. 25-31.

[69]Grew to Eberhardt, December 14, 1925, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 643.

Conservatives were in control of most of the country. The Liberals held only sections of the East Coast and uninhabited areas in the interior. To the State Department the Conservatives looked like the winners and the Liberals, losers. Díaz was a known quantity (he had been president during the first intervention in 1912). He had not been openly involved in the Chamorro uprising of 1925 and hence, was acceptable to the Department under the provisions of Article II of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. The State Department felt that he could control his fellow Conservatives.[70] He was favored by Dennis in Managua, and he was willing to make changes the State Department thought necessary to bring about stability--amnesty for Liberals, Liberal participation in the government, reorganization of the Guardia Nacional.[71] In short, it appeared to the State Department that support of Díaz was in the best interest of the United States.

On November 15, 1926, one day after assuming office and two days before receiving recognition, Díaz notified the United States that, in face of the Mexican supported Liberal revolt, his government was unable to protect foreign interests

---

[70]Kellogg to Dennis, November 2, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 804.

[71]Munro, U.S. and Caribbean, p. 250.

in Nicaragua and requested the U.S. to provide such protection. Díaz' appeal, in part, said:

> Upon assuming the presidency, I found the Republic in a very difficult situation because of the attitude, assumed without motive, by the Government of Mexico in open hostility to Nicaragua. It must be clear to you that, given the forces which that Government disposes of, its elements of attack are irresistable for this feeble and small nation. . . . [This] emergency. . .places in peril the interests of North American citizens and other foreigners residing in our territory and renders it impossible, for a Government so rudely attacked, to protect them as is its duty and as it desires.[72]

The American reply on December 8 was cool indicating that Díaz had the moral support of the United States but that physical support would not be forthcoming.[73] However, the American Legation's warning on the 13th and 15th of December that the Díaz government was in danger of falling without active support,[74] the imposition of Liberal taxes on American firms, Mexican involvement, the appeals of American business firms for protection of their employees and investments,[75]

---

[72]Dennis to Kellogg, December 8, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, pp. 809-10.

[73]Kellogg to Dennis, December 8, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, pp. 810-11.

[74]Eberhardt to Kellogg, December 15, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 811; Kellogg to Eberhardt, December 18, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 812; Eberhardt to Kellogg, December 19, 1926, Foreign Relations, 1926, II, p. 813.

[75]From August, 1926, through December, the State Department received twenty some odd requests from American businesses for protection of their property and employees (Department of State, A Brief History of the Relations Between the United States and Nicaragua, 1909-1928 [Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928], pp. 65-68.).

the appeals of European governments for protection of their citizens, trade, the Monroe Doctrine, and the canal; all weighed to a greater or lesser amount in the decision to send in the "colonial infantry"--the Marines!

The Marines declared neutral zones at Puerto Cabezas and Río Grande on December 23, 1926 (See APPENDIX III, Fig. 1). On January 6, 1927, Marines and sailors from the USS Galveston reestablished the Legation Guard in Managua. Pearl Lagoon was declared a neutral zone on the 8th. On the 9th, Marines from the USS Cleveland established a neutral zone at Prinzapolca. On the 10th, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, went ashore at Bluefields (which had been a neutral zone since August 26, 1926). Marine and naval forces later extended neutral zones to West Coast towns (in March), the interior (Matagalpa in April), and the length of the national railway (in February). The 2nd Battalion, less the 51st Company, transferred to Managua where it relieved Conservative forces of the defense of the Capital on February 1.[76] On February 25, the U.S. Government sold Nicaragua 3,000 Krag rifles, 200 Browning machine-guns, and 3,500,000 rounds of ammunition (for $217,718.).[77]

---

[76]Nalty, Marines in Nicaragua, p. 14.

[77]Olds to Nicaraguan Minister (César), February 18, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 456.

The U.S. military build-up had begun. By the beginning of March, 2,000 Marines were in Nicaragua; by mid-May the number was nearly 3,000.[78]

The Settlement

In early March, 1927, an American encouraged, final attempt between the Liberals and Conservatives to negotiate the problem of whom should be interim president (until the 1928 elections) failed. "The failure of the State Department to formulate a satisfactory localagreement meant the continuance of the bloody but indeterminate strife. The State Department now attempted to end the intolerable situation. Under all circumstances, its prestige demanded bringing peace--albeit a forced peace--to the troubled land."[79] On March 31, President Coolidge, on the recommendation of the State Department, requested former Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, to go to Nicaragua to arrange a settlement between the warring factions.

On April 9, Stimson left New York aboard the Chilean steamship Aconcagua. Two days before, in a meeting with the President, Secretary of State Kellogg, and Assistant Secretary

---

[78]Heinl, Soldiers, pp. 263, 265. It is interesting to note that the total active Marine Corps in 1927 numbered 19,198 (The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial Times to the Present, p. 736.). Concomitantly with the Nicaraguan Expedition, the Corps in May, 1927, had 4,100 troops in China (Clyde H. Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps [New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939], p. 427.).

[79]Cox, Nicaragua and the United States, p. 797.

Olds, Stimson had been provided with the following policy guidelines: (1) Díaz' position was not negotiable, and (2) if the Liberals resisted, they were to be crushed--reluctantly.[80] These guidelines didn't require much finesse. It was to be a power play.

Stimson arrived in Managua on the 17th. After being briefed by the American minister and the Marine and Navy commanders, Stimson sought the views of both the Liberals and Conservatives. He spoke with President Díaz and travelled to the Liberal and Conservative strongholds of León and Granada, respectively. Members of both parties visited him in Managua. From these consultations with the two opposing groups, Stimson discerned three points of agreement: (1) a desire for return to orderly government, (2) that this would be best accomplished by the U.S. supervision of the 1928 presidential election, and (3) that such supervision was to be backed by sufficient police power to make the election truly fair.[81] Stimson cabled Washington and received a reply that the U.S. would be willing to supervise the upcoming election upon request of the Nicaraguan government.

On the 22nd of April, President Díaz gave Stimson a six-point peace proposal to be presented to the Liberals. Its provisions were: (1) surrender of all arms (Liberal and Conservative) to U.S. custody, (2) general amnesty, return of

---

[80]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 99.

[81]Stimson, American Policy, pp. 56-57.

exiles and confiscated property, (3) Liberal participation in the Díaz cabinet, (4) the establishment of a nonpartisan constabulary under command of U.S. officers, (5) U.S. supervision of the 1928 elections, and (6) a continued presence of Marines to enforce the other provisions.[82] Stimson transmitted these proposals to Sacasa with the stipulation that they were contingent upon Díaz remaining in power for the remainder of his term.

Late on the 29th, Sacasa's Foreign Minister, Minister of the Interior, and private secretary arrived in Managua from Puerto Cabezas to discuss the peace proposal.[83] In two days of talks, a general consensus was reached between Stimson and the Sacasa representatives on all points save one--Díaz' continuance in office.

On May 1, the Sacasa delegates requested Stimson to put them in contact with Moncada so that his opinion could be obtained on the terms of the Díaz proposal and on the matter of Díaz remaining in office. Stimson was delighted to comply since he felt that Moncada "might be less technical in approving a substantially just compromise than the civilian

---

[82] Ibid., pp. 63-64. On the previous day, April 21, Stimson and the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, Carlos Cuadra Pasos, had drafted the terms of the peace proposal. The Díaz plan was virtually identical to that decided upon by Stimson and Pasos on the 21st (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 123-24.).

[83] Transportation was provided by the destroyer, USS Preston.

leaders of his party."[84] In his message to Moncada (carried by three American officers through the lines), Stimson urged that Moncada come himself to negotiate. Moncada replied on the afternoon of the 3rd that he would meet with the Sacasa delegates and Stimson at Tipitapa on the following day.

It was all over in 45 minutes. Moncada agreed to all the Díaz terms except Díaz' continuance in office. He felt that he could not honorably ask his subordinates to agree to such a condition. Hence, he requested Stimson to provide him with a letter indicating that the United States would not negotiate this point. With the U.S. insistence on the matter made clear, Moncada could then present the peace proposal as a U.S. ultimatum against which it was hopeless to resist and compliance was the only sensible course of action. Stimson drafted the letter that afternoon (See APPENDIX I).[85]

On the 5th, Stimson and Moncada met again, this time in Managua, to arrange the details of the disarmament. It was agreed that Moncada's army would surrender its arms within eight days, his men were to receive food and clothing, and each man would receive ten dollars for each rifle or machine-gun turned in.[86] On the 11th at Tipitapa, at Moncada's request, Stimson provided Moncada with another letter in

---

[84]Stimson, American Policy, p. 76.

[85]Ibid., pp. 76-79.

[86]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 110.

which Stimson reassured him of President Coolidge's intent to meet the obligations incurred by the United States on May 4 and informed Moncada of the actions taken and planned by the Díaz government in fulfilling the obligations that government had assumed on May 4.[87] On the 12th, all of Moncada's lieutenants, but one, agreed to the Tipitapa Settlement. His name was Augusto C. Sandino.

When Stimson left for the United States four days later, he thought that the Nicaraguan problem was finished.[88] The Marines would quickly eliminate Sandino's small band. He was wrong. The intervention was just beginning.

---

[87]The Personal Representative of the President of the United States (Stimson) to General Moncada, May 11, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 345-46.

[88]Eberhardt to Kellogg, May 15, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 347-48.

CHAPTER II

SANDINO'S REVOLT

Sandino's refusal to surrender his arms and to accept the conditions of the Tipitapa Settlement was an apparent reversal of his formerly proclaimed intentions made in a letter to Moncada on May 9, 1927. In that letter, Sandino stated:

> I have decided to go to Jinotega again to assemble my men, in order to collect all the arms. In this case I shall remain there awaiting your orders.
> I likewise delegate my rights in order that you may arrange the matter [the surrender of Liberal forces] as may suit you best, informing me of the results at Jinotega, which I shall occupy with my troops.[1]

Several explanations have been offered to resolve this contradiction between declared intent and subsequent action. To the Marines, Sandino was a Bolshevist bent on revolution, and the Tipitapa agreements confirmed at the May 11 meeting between Stimson and Moncada meant the "prospect of failure of his socialistic dreams." To keep these dreams alive, according to the Marines, he broke with the Liberal Army and fled north with a small band of followers to carry on the

---

[1]General Sandino to General Moncada (translation), May 9, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 344.

social revolution.[2] The American minister in Nicaragua considered him to be a bandit and attributed his actions in the immediate post-Tipitapa period to personal gain.[3] Sandino's supporters claim that he never agreed to the peace settlement and his retirement to Jinotega (in mountainous North Central Nicaragua) enabled him to evade Moncada and continue the revolt.[4] Whether the May 9th letter to Moncada was a bit of subterfuge to mislead Moncada or whether Sandino did in fact undergo a change of heart is not clear. What is clear is that Sandino rejected the Tipitapa Settlement and decided to continue the effort to unseat the Conservative regime of President Díaz. This partisan objective, to oust the Conservatives from government, accounts for Sandino's refusal to lay down his arms and abide by the agreements reached at Tipitapa. That this was his political goal, the removal of the Conservative government, is readily apparent from a letter sent to the Second Brigade Commander, General Logan Feland, on May 21, 1927:

---

[2]Julian C. Smith, et al., A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (n.p., [1937]). p. 63. Hereinafter referred to as Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional.

[3]Eberhardt to Kellogg, July 20, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 441-42.

[4]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 121.

> . . . we propose that the two parties [Liberal and Conservative] leave the affairs of the republic in the hands of the American governor, until absolutely free elections have been had. If this is done we shall give over our arms, . . .[5]

And on June 14, 1927:

> We do not give up our arms unless the President is substituted by a Liberal man of honor.[6]

These statements reveal that Sandino's motive was not that of a bandit, a communist, nor of a super-patriot defending the sovereignty of tiny Nicaragua, but rather that of a Liberal who refused to accept the Díaz presidency imposed on Nicaragua by the United States and acceded to by Moncada.

While Sandino and his small band (about thirty)[7] were trekking north into the Segovia Mountains (eventually arriving at El Jícaro in Nueva Segovia), Nicaragua was returning to a peaceful condition.[8] Sacasa left Nicaragua for Costa Rica on the 20th of May; by the 26th, the American minister was reporting that Sandino was "the only remaining revolutionary

---

[5]Letter from Sandino to General Feland (translation), Yali, May 21, 1927. Located in a notebook entitled "Sandino" (Card Catalogue No. VE231,.N121991) held at Historical Division, Reference Section, Headquarters, USMC, Washington D.C. Hereinafter referred to as "Sandino Notebook."

[6]Letter from Sandino to Jefe Politico, Ocotal (translation), El Berrugillo, June 14, 1927, "Sandino Notebook." The following translation of the same passage is found in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 234: "We don't give up our rifles even if the Nicaraguan president is substituted by a Liberal man of honor." The translation appearing in the "Sandino Notebook" seems more consistent with Sandino's political objectives.

[7]Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 65.

[8]On June 18, Sandino established a rebel government at El Jícaro. He modestly renamed the town, Ciudad Sandino.

leader of consequence who has refused to lay down his arms";[9] the turn-in of Liberal and Conservative weapons to the U.S. Arms Commission, began on May 12, was completed on the 6th of June; and due to the lack of any apparent serious military threat to the Díaz government and the urgent need for troops in China, 1000 Marines were withdrawn from Nicaragua during June, 1927.[10]

Unfortunately for the United States, Sandino would not go away. At the end of June he made his first raid. He attacked the San Albino Gold Mine (about five miles southeast of El Jícaro), obtaining 500 pounds of dynamite and taking over the operation of the mine.[11] On July 2, 1927, Admiral Latimer ordered General Feland to disarm Sandino. Up to this time, the Marines and the Legation had considered Sandino to be only a minor nuisance, characterizing him as an ordinary outlaw (with which the Northern Departments of Nicaragua had always been plagued) or as a slightly demented Bolshevist. The confiscation of the American owned San Albino Mine evoked the response of July the 2nd, but the belief that the Sandinistas would wither away or would eventually cross the

---

[9]Eberhardt to Kellogg, May 26, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 349-50.

[10]Heinl, Soldiers, p. 266.

[11]Eberhardt to Kellogg, June 30, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 439-40.

Honduras border with as much plunder as they could carry lingered on until the 16th of July when Sandino struck the Marine--Guardia Nacional garrison at Ocotal, Nueva Segovia.[12] From then on, the Marines, the Legation, and the State Department took Sandino seriously.

Three days prior to his attack on Ocotal, Sandino, in a letter to the Marine commander of that garrison, reiterated his conditions for peace--the ouster of Díaz and his replacement by a Liberal.[13] This stated political objective was repeated on the 17th and then again on the 26th of August.[14] Sandino's belief that he could force the United States to forgo its support of Díaz--a policy that the United States had consistently followed since November 17, 1926, and was expressly and firmly stated in the Tipitapa Settlement--is difficult to explain. One can only assume that he expected a great deal of partisan support, especially from traditionally Liberal Nueva Segovia, and that either he was unaware or he underestimated the U.S. resolve to maintain Díaz as president until the 1928 elections. The Liberals, for the most part,

---

[12]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 140-41.

[13]Letter from Sandino to G.D. Hatfield (translation), El Chipote, July 13, 1927, "Sandino Notebook."

[14]Letter from Sandino to the Liberals of Ocotal and to the Central Americans (translation), Las Sabanas, July 17, 1927, and Letter from Sandino to the Liberals of Nicaragua (translation), El Chipote, August 26, 1927, "Sandino Notebook."

followed the lead of the new head of the party (with Sacasa's departure), Moncada, in denouncing or, at least in not supporting Sandino.[15]

It must have become apparent to Sandino that he had little influence over the bulk of the Liberal Party; that his movement, based on the removal of the Conservative president, was not receiving the support he had hoped for; and that it would ultimately fail. He had to find a new cause that would enable him to pursue his objective, keep alive his own political prospects, and be more popular. Expulsion of the Marines, "the assassins and invaders" of Nicaragua, and "freeing Nicaragua from the Yankee imperialism"[16] would satisfy all three requirements. Sandino's new theme, ouster of the Marines and sovereignty, would remain as his declared political

---

[15]Moncada, in a handbill "distributed throughout the provinces surrounding Sandino's camp," declared:

> "It is a duty of ours not to have anything to do with the Chief Sandino, and to declare no liberal is responsible for such outrageous things and for this cause, he is not worthy of consideration for his last acts in the constitutional move [?] because of having disobeyed the orders to disarm. He does not respect Liberty, nor property nor the lives of persons."

(Handbill from Moncada to All the Friends of the Republic, especially to the Septentrionals [translation], Managua, July 2, 1927, "Sandino Notebook.").

[16]Proclamation of Sandino concerning the 1928 elections (translation), El Chipote, October 6, 1927, "Sandino Notebook."

objectives till the end of the intervention.[17] Although Moncada, a Liberal, was elected to the presidency in 1928, Sandino considered him to be a traitor who would "only represent and defend the interest of somebody else, and not those of the country."[18] Besides, after the break with Moncada over Tipitapa and the trading of diatribes, it is unlikely that Sandino would have been welcomed in Managua. Hence, he opposed Moncada's presidency as resolutely as he had Díaz', probably more for his own political gains than for any other reason. It was not until Sacasa, the former vice-president and Liberal who Sandino had continued to support after Tipitapa,[19] was elected as president in 1932 and the Marines withdrew in 1933 that Sandino stopped fighting. There was nothing more to fight about. The Marines were gone, and a Liberal, satisfactory to Sandino, occupied the presidential palace.

---

[17]See, Letter from Sandino to John Nevin Sayre and Robert C. Jones (translation) El Chipote, January 1, 1928, "Sandino Notebook"; and Letter from Sandino to Froylan Turcios, (translation), El Chipote, March 14, 1928, "Marine Corps Units in Nicaragua, 1927-1933," Box 10, File Folder 2, located at the Federal Record Center, Suitland, Md. Hereinafter referred to as FRC. Also, General Sandino to the Commander of the U.S. Special Service Squadron (Sellers) (translation), February 3, 1928, Foreign Relations, 1928, III, p. 569; General Sandino to the Manager of the La Luz and Los Angeles Mines (translation), April 29, 1928, Foreign Relations, 1928, III, pp. 575-76; and Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 231.

[18]Proclamation of Sandino concerning the 1928 elections (translation), El Chipote, October 6, 1927, "Sandino Notebook."

[19]See Sandino's letter of July 17, 1927, and the October 6 proclamation previously mentioned.

Although Sandino may have temporarily groped for a political cause that would win him internal and external support, his military objective, dictated by necessity, was never in question--maintain a force in the field.[20] Sandino could not hope to defeat decisively the Marines or, later, the Marine commanded Guardia Nacional. He had neither the logistics nor the manpower (See APPENDIX II, TABLE I) to do so, and whether he had the ability may be questioned. The best he could hope to do was keep the revolution alive by conducting small unit actions--the ambush and the hit-and-run--against numerically inferior patrols or against small, isolated outposts.[21] These tactics are not to be faulted, given the limited capabilities of Sandino's forces and his political objectives. For while they may not produce the "annihilation of the enemy," they do permit the preservation of oneself."[22] When the former is impossible, the latter is a suitable alternative. By demonstrating that he could conduct sustained guerrilla activities in the face of sizeable opposition, Sandino showed that when and if the Marines withdrew he would be a political force that would have to be taken into consideration by any future Nicaraguan government. Indeed, he, Sandino, would be in a position to exert

---

[20]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 22, 25.

[21]Ibid., pp. 23, 26-27, 70.

[22]Mao Tse-tung, Mao Tse-tung: An Anthology of his Writings, ed. by Anne Fremantle, Mentor Books (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1962), p. 136.

considerable influence in determining the political composition of the government, if not the presidency itself.[23] This, after all, was his political objective--to install a Liberal government and president in Managua. Such an influential status would also serve to satisfy his own political ambitions.

What, in summation, can be said about Sandino's actions? His revolt had as its objective the placement of a Liberal in the presidency. When this stated aim failed to acquire the support of his own party and fellow countrymen, Sandino sought a more popular cause. The Yankees were both obtrusive and intrusive. They were an easy mark, but Sandino's goal remained the same--a Liberal in the presidential palace. In the beginning, Sandino may have been dedicated to this partisan cause per se; later, his motives were not entirely altruistic. When a Liberal was elected president (Moncada), Sandino, realizing that he would have little or no influence in the government, opposed Moncada as strongly as he had the Conservative Díaz. Sandino did not cease fighting until there was a Liberal president (Sacasa) from whom he could reasonably expect some political

---

[23]Sandino would later claim, in February, 1934, that there were three powers in Nicaragua: himself, the Guardia Nacional, and President Sacasa (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 336.).

rewards and over whom he could possibly exert some influence.[24] It is somewhat ironic that in view of Sandino's professed aim of driving out the Marines, it is likely that his revolt prolonged the intervention. The U.S., by the Tipitapa agreements, was committed to maintaining an armed force in Nicaragua only through the 1928 elections. Had Sandino surrendered his arms along with the other Liberal chiefs in May of 1927, the Marines would probably have been gone shortly after the elections. As it was, they did not depart until four years later in January, 1933. Sandino was an enigma to the Marines and the State Department. Reports concerning his objectives and political philosophy were invariably filled with suppositions. The American minister's early classification of Sandino as a common outlaw was maintained throughout the intervention more so to deny him a belligerent status than as an accurate assessment of his motives. Clearly, he was more than a thief. Perhaps, the best characterization of Sandino is the one offered by Carleton Beals who interviewed him in 1928:

> "He is not a bandit, call him a fool, a fanatic, an idealist, a patriot--according to your point of view; but certainly he is not a bandit."[25]

---

[24] It is interesting to note that in December, 1932, the Guardia Nacional reported only six contacts with the Sandinistas. In the first six days of November (the election was held on November 6th), there were twelve contacts; for the remainder of the month, there were nine ("Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.).

[25] Carleton Beals, Banana Gold (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1932), p. 306.

CHAPTER III

THE NASCENT GUARDIA

The United States created the Marine commanded Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua in hopes that it would provide that missing element in Nicaraguan politics that would enable fair and free elections to take place which in turn, it was hoped, would put an end to the seemingly habitual national instability. To accomplish the goal of ensuring fair elections, and thereby stability, the United States sought to develop a militarily competent, non-partisan national police organization capable of maintaining "peace, law, and order" and of "preventing any fraud or intimidation of voters."[1]

On May 8, 1927, President Díaz formally requested the United States to designate an American officer "to

---

[1]The Personal Representative of the President of the United States in Nicaragua (Stimson) to General Moncada, May 11, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 345-46; and General Order No. 1, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, May 21, 1927, File "N," HQ, USMC. The above General Order can also be found in Box 10, File Folder 17, FRC.

instruct and command" the National Guard.[2] The U.S. acceded to the request on May 11.[3] On the 12th, Lt. Col. Robert Y. Rhea, USMC, became the first Jefe Director of the new Guardia Nacional. Allegedly, Díaz would have preferred U.S. Army instructors to Marines but Admiral Latimer is supposed to have persuaded him to accept the Marines.[4] Rhea's assignment, as an active duty officer, to the command of the Guardia was legal under a recently passed U.S. law. Congress had authorized the president on May 19, 1926,

> . . . to detail officers and enlisted men of the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to assist the governments of the Republics of North America, Central America, and South America and of the Republics of Cuba, Haiti, and Santo Domingo, in military and naval matters: . . .[5]

When Col. Rhea (Brigadier General in the Guardia) took command in May, the remnant of Carter's National Guard (then under the command of Carter's chief assistant--a Major Rodriquez) consisted of seven companies plus a headquarters company[6] totaling 295 enlisted men of whom 65 were absent

---

[2]Eberhardt to Kellogg, May 8, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 433.

[3]Kellogg to Eberhardt, May 11, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 434.

[4]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 133.

[5]Act of May 19, 1926, ch. 334, 44 U.S. Stat. L., pt. 2, 565, quoted in Department of State, Survey of Relations, p. 54.

[6]General Orders No. 2 and 3, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, May 25 and 26, 1927, Box 10, File Folder 17, FRC.

without leave.[7] Col. Rhea immediately set about to convert this "old" Guardia into an efficient organization "that every citizen of Nicaragua may be proud of. . . and all its personnel glad and satisfied to serve."[8] The new Guardia, Rhea specified, would be non-partisan, composed of three-year volunteers, and, of course, trained and commanded by officers and non-commissioned officers of the Corps. "As soon as practicable," the Guard would establish a school for the training of Nicaraguan officers, and "from time to time," the Jefe Director would commission enlisted from the ranks as their merit and ability warranted.[9] On May 24, 1927, the first recruit entered the service. Between the 18th and the 25th of May, Col. Rhea formed the 1st Company, Recruit Company, and Headquarters Company.[10] The bulk of the men composing these companies were probably taken from the old organization. Of the 230 enlisted guardsmen present when the Marines took over the Guard, Rhea retained 95. The remainder were discharged on the 26th and 27th of May.[11]

---

[7] Evans F. Carlson, "The Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," Marine Corps Gazette, XXI (August, 1937), p. 9, quoted in Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 130.

[8] General Order No. 1, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, May 21, 1927, File "N," HQ, USMC.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 9.

[11] General Orders No. 2 and 3, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, May 25 and 26, 1927, Box 10, File Folder 17, FRC.

Rhea's tour of duty as Jefe Director was short. He was able to do little more than initiate its development. Due to ill health, he was relieved as director on June 29, 1927, and an interim commander succeeded him pending the appointment of the new director. On July 11, 1927, Lt. Col. Elias R. Beadle, USMC, assumed the duties of Jefe Director, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, with the rank of Brigadier General, GN.

During these early weeks of its development, the growth of the Guardia was slow. It was coffee picking season--a time of good wages and available employment. Besides, in the past, Nicaraguan military institutions had often been negligent in meeting their payrolls. There was no reason for the Nicaraguan peasant to believe that the Yankees would be any different.[12] Nevertheless, the Guard did manage to man, equip, and train one combat unit in a little over a month. On July 1, 1927, the 1st Company, comprised of three American Guardia Nacional officers and fifty enlisted nationals, departed Managua to join the Marines already stationed at Ocotal.[13] The 2nd and 3rd Companies became active in August, manning outposts in the Departments of Chinandega and Estelí, respectively (See APPENDIX II, TABLE 2, for dates on which the other companies assumed active operations).

---

[12]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 10.

[13]Ibid., p. 9.

During the first two months of its existence, the Guardia functioned without any definitive precepts. It was not until July that the Nicaraguan government established guidelines for the organization and operation of the Guardia Nacional.[14] On the 13th, President Díaz set the force level of the Guardia Nacional at 600 enlisted and limited the extent of American participation to 6.5 per cent (39) of the enlisted strength. The President subsequently changed this percentage to 10 per cent (60) in September.[15] This authorized strength (660) was about one and one half times that of the old Guard (415).[16] Díaz issued two more orders concerning the duties and organization of the Guard during July. On the 29th, he directed the National Guard to "take over the police service in the country as soon as possible" beginning with the Department of Chinandega.[17] This edict was followed on the 30th by Presidential Decree No. 54 which dealt specifically

---

[14]A monthly pay scale, however, had been decreed by executive order on June 18, 1927.

[15]Letter from President Díaz to Sr. Jefe Director de la Guardia Nacional, Managua, July 13, 1927; and Letter from President Díaz to Sr. Jefe Director de la Guardia Nacional Managua, September 8, 1927, both printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 205-06.

[16]Article 2 of the legislation of May 14, 1925, authorizing the formation of a National Guard, specified that the Guard would be composed of 23 officers and 392 enlisted (Thurston to Kellogg, May 15, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1925, II, p. 629.).

[17]Letter from President Díaz to General Beadle, Managua, July 29, 1927, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 206.

with duties of the Guard and its relationship with the president. It is probable that this decree was heavily influenced by the proposed treaty between the United States and Nicaragua regarding the Guardia Nacional which was submitted to President Díaz by General Feland in July.[18] Many of the provisions of Decree No. 54 and the proposed treaty were similar (some were virtually verbatim transcriptions). It is apparent that the decree was intended as an interim directive pending approval of the Marine drafted treaty by the Nicaraguan government. The July 30th order assigned the following missions to the Guardia Nacional: (1) the policing of the Republic, (2) the control of all arms, ammunitions, and military supplies, (3) the control of all government property formerly held by the army, navy, and police forces, and (4) the training of native officers. The decree also established that "the Guardia Nacional would be subject only to the direction of the President of Nicaragua." There would be no intervening officials between the president and the jefe director. U.S. military personnel on duty with the Guard were exempted by the order from Nicaraguan law and were subject only to the courts-martial laws of the United States.[19]

---

[18]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 147.

[19]Presidential Decree No. 54, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 207-08.

Although Decree No. 54 specified the chain of command between the president of Nicaragua and the commanding general of the Guard, the relationship between the Marine Second Brigade and the Guardia Nacional was apparently not clarified until late in 1927. On November 16, 1927, the Director of Operations and Training, USMC, sent a memorandum to the Major General Commandant stating that he considered all Navy and Marine Corps personnel assigned to the Guardia Nacional to be members of the Second Brigade.[20] This meant that Beadle who was directly responsible to the Nicaraguan president was simultaneously subordinate to the Second Brigade Commander. The Secretary of the Navy changed this situation the following month when he issued a directive entitled "Instructions for forces in Nicaragua." Addressed to the Commander Special Service Squadron, the order established two separate chains of command:

> BASIC PRINCIPLES. The Second Brigade constitutes the force of the United States, responsible to the President of the United States. The National Guard constitutes the force of Nicaragua, responsible to the President of Nicaragua. These two forces should operate independently of each other, except in an emergency requiring joint action.
>
> COMMAND. The command of the Second Brigade will rest in the Brigade Commander, responsible to the Commander, Special Service Squadron, to the Navy Department and to the Major General Commandant. The command of the National Guard will rest in the commanding officer thereof, responsible to the President of Nicaragua. . . .
>
> DISCIPLINE. The discipline of the Second Brigade will be administered by the Brigade Commander, in accordance with the law and regulations. The discipline of the

---

[20]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 176.

National Guard will be administered by the commanding officer thereof solely in so far as the native personnel is concerned. In the case of members of the naval service attached to the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, discipline will be administered by the commanding officer thereof within the limits of his legal powers, i.e., in ordering summary courts-martial, deck courts, and the awarding of punishments. In cases where such naval service personnel require trial by general courts-martial, the individuals will be transferred to the Second Brigade. . .

ORGANIZATION, SUPPLY, ADMINISTRATION, AND TRAINING. These activities will be conducted independently by the commanders of the Second Brigade and the National Guard. . . .

CORRESPONDENCE. Correspondence will be conducted direct by each commander through the proper channels without reference to each other. Matters pertaining to combined operations, however, will be conducted through the senior officer present. . . .

. . . . . .

SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT. The senior officer present will be the officer of the naval service present in the line of command, according to United States commission

. . . .

. . . . . .

MILITARY OPERATIONS. Combined operations will be under the direction of the commanding officer of the brigade subject to the command of the senior officer present. When forces of the Second Brigade and of the National Guard are acting together, the senior officer in line of command, according to United States commission, whether of the brigade or of the guard, will command the combined force.[21]

It is interesting to speculate on the source of the concept of independent commands stated in the Secretary's directive. Given the military's penchant for pyramidal organizations with one, final decision-maker at the top, it seems unlikely that a suggestion for two separate institutions

---

[21]Letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Commander, Special Service Squadron, Washington, December 9, 1927, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 213-14.

would have originated with the Admirals and Generals. It is possible that the idea came from the civilian side of the Navy Department, but it seems more probable that the State Department devised the arrangement in order to make the Guard somewhat more responsive to the local conditions and to the president of Nicaragua. This was admirable, if true, or it may have been just a politically convenient sop to Nicaraguan pride; but whatever the reason, the scheme certainly placed the Guard commander in an uncomfortable position. The officer corps of the Marines in 1927 was small. Its members numbered only 1198.[22] It was very possible that the Marine officer assigned as the Jefe Director de la Guardia Nacional would, at some time later in his career, find himself as a subordinate to the former Second Brigade Commander, later himself, serving in a different capacity. Even if he did not, an influential, discrediting word dropped here and there could seriously mar his career. This situation must have, in some way, affected the Guardia commander in the performance of his duties. Obligated by his position as jefe director to carry out the orders of the president of Nicaragua and to do all in his power to further the interests of the Guardia Nacional, the Guard commander must have been constantly aware of the effects his actions would have on his future as a Marine officer, particularly

---

[22] The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial Times to the Present, p. 736.

when the interests of the United States or of the Second Brigade were contrary to those of Nicaragua or the National Guard. So, although the Brigade and Guard were formally separated in principle, in practice, the division was probably less than complete; and in a confrontation between the two, the best the jefe director could hope for would be a draw and then only with the support of a third party--such as the Legation.

The potential dichotomy of U.S.--Nicaragua or Second Brigade--Guardia Nacional did not occur during 1927-28, and consequently the subordination of the American commander of the Guard to the president of Nicaragua (vice to a U.S. official) worked well during the remainder of the Díaz term. Díaz was under no illusions as to the political autonomy of Nicaragua.[23] His government had only narrowly escaped being overthrown by the Liberals and owed its existence to the U.S. Consequently, the interests of Nicaragua were identical to those of the United States. President Díaz followed the American lead dutifully, and when the Nicaraguan Congress balked, he issued decrees on cue. Neither did Díaz attempt to use the Guardia Nacional for political purposes. His successor, Moncada, was not so scrupulous, employing the Guard to arrest his political opponents.[24] But in 1927-28 there

---

[23]Stimson intended Díaz to be only a "figurehead" executive and believed Díaz had accepted this reduced status (Eberhardt to Kellogg, May 2, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, pp. 334-35.).

[24]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 243-46.

were few such problems, and no serious disagreement appears to have emerged between the Guard and the Brigade until the early months of 1929.

One problem, however, was the legal status of the Guard. Until late December, 1927, the legal bases for the existence, organization, and operations of the Guard were presidential decrees. This situation was nearly remedied on December 22 with the signing of an agreement between the United States and Nicaragua formally establishing the Guardia Nacional. The agreement was signed in Managua by the American chargé d'affaires ad interim and the Nicaraguan foreign minister. The twelve articles of the treaty set forth the pay, strength (93 officers, 1136 enlisted), annual budget ($689,132.), chain of command, and missions of the Guard. In addition, it provided for the assignment of U.S. officers and enlisted men "to assist the Government of Nicaragua in the organizing and training" of a National Guard and for their exemption from Nicaraguan law. The items of mission, chain of command, and American exemption from Nicaraguan law were no different than those of Presidential Decree No. 54 issued in July. Two provisos, however, were significant. The specifications of Article I which established the pay, strength, and budget were to be "regarded as the minimum requirements [emphasis added] for the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," and Article II specified that the Guard would be "the sole [emphasis added] military and police force of the Republic."[25]

---

[25]"Agreement between the United States and the Republic of Nicaragua, "printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 208-12.

The agreement almost immediately ran into difficulties. Although the Nicaraguan Senate passed the treaty on January 10, 1928, the Chamber of Deputies, for reasons not yet clear, refused to do so.[26] The rejection of the treaty by the deputies, however, did not hamper the operations of the Guard. It continued to function under decree-law. Both houses of Congress finally passed an amended agreement on February 19, 1929, and President Moncada signed it into law two days later on the 21st.[27] The State Department considered the revised agreement unacceptable. It was never approved by the Department. The U.S. objections centered around the change in Article I that altered the "minimum requirements" to the "only requirements," the possible subordination of the Guardia commander to officials other than the president (Articles II and VIII), the apparent reduction in the director's control over the internal affairs of the Guard (Article III), the possible exposure, without adequate safeguards, of native guardsmen to civil jurisdiction (Article V), and the requirement that all American officers

---

[26]Millett suggests that the power struggle within the Conservative Party between Foreign Minister Carlos Cuadra Pasos and General Chamorro caused Chamorro to have his supporters in the Chamber of Deputies block the passage of the treaty (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 223-23.).

[27]Eberhardt to Kellogg, February 20 and 21, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 619 and 620.

assigned to the Guard be able to speak Spanish (Article XII).[28] Although Moncada considered that the amended agreement as passed by the Nicaraguan Congress and signed by him was technically law,[29] he apparently expressed to the American minister that he felt "disposed to continue the operation of the Guardia under the [then] present arrangement" of decree-laws. While this was not entirely satisfactory to the State Department, it was acceptable in view of the objectionable amended agreement.[30]

The Guardia's first seven months were a modicum of success. From the small core of 95 men retained by Col. Rhea from the "old" Guard, the New Guard had grown to 438 enlisted and 46 officers on October 1st and had further expanded to 576 enlisted and 82 officers by the end of the year (December 31, 1927). While desertions for the last three months of 1927 numbered 14, there were 174 enlistments.[31] The Guard,

---

[28]Stimson to Hanna, May 29, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 630-35; and Hanna to Stimson, May 23, 1930, Foreign Relations, 1930, III, pp. 659-68. The entire amended agreement as passed by the Nicaraguan Congress is printed in Eberhardt to Kellogg, March 30, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 625-30.

[29]Eberhardt to Kellogg, March 7, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 621.

[30]Stimson to Hanna, May 29, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 632-33.

[31]"Annual Personnel Report Covering the Period of 1 October 1927 to 1 October 1928 inclusive," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. This writer was unable to locate any statistics on desertions and enlistments prior to October, 1927.

during the seven months, was involved in 20 contacts with the Sandinistas suffering 15 casualties (Killed in Action, Died of Wounds, and Wounded in Action) including 1 Marine killed and 1 wounded. The enemy sustained 248 casualties as a result of the 20 engagements.[32] Since the establishment of the 1st Company in May, four additional field companies were formed and subsequently deployed to outposts in the Western and Northern sections of the country and to the National Penitentiary in Managua. On January 1, 1928, the Organizational Chart of the Guardia Nacional appeared as on page 61.

The Guard continued to expand in 1928 under the tutelage of its Jefe Director, Brig. Gen. Beadle. General Beadle had definite convictions as to the purpose of the Guardia Nacional and quite naturally the organization reflected its commander's beliefs. Unfortunately, and perhaps necessarily, Beadle's concept of the duties of the Guard were in marked contrast to what the Second Brigade Commander, General Feland, came to think they should be. In 1928 there was no open clash between the two commanders--1929 would not be nearly so harmonious.

---

[32] "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim; and "Marine Corps Casualties in Nicaragua: January 1, 1927, to January 2, 1933 (corrected copy)," File "N," HQ, USMC. Of the 20 contacts, 17 involved combined Marine-Guardia patrols, only 1 involved a Marine-led Guardia patrol, and the 2 remaining contacts involved patrols whose composition could not be determined. The Marines (exclusive of those serving with the Guard) suffered 31 casualties in the 20 contacts. Enemy casualties do not include those designated as "estimated" in the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua." In 1927, there were an additional fifty estimated "bandit" casualties, all occurring at Ocotal on July 16.

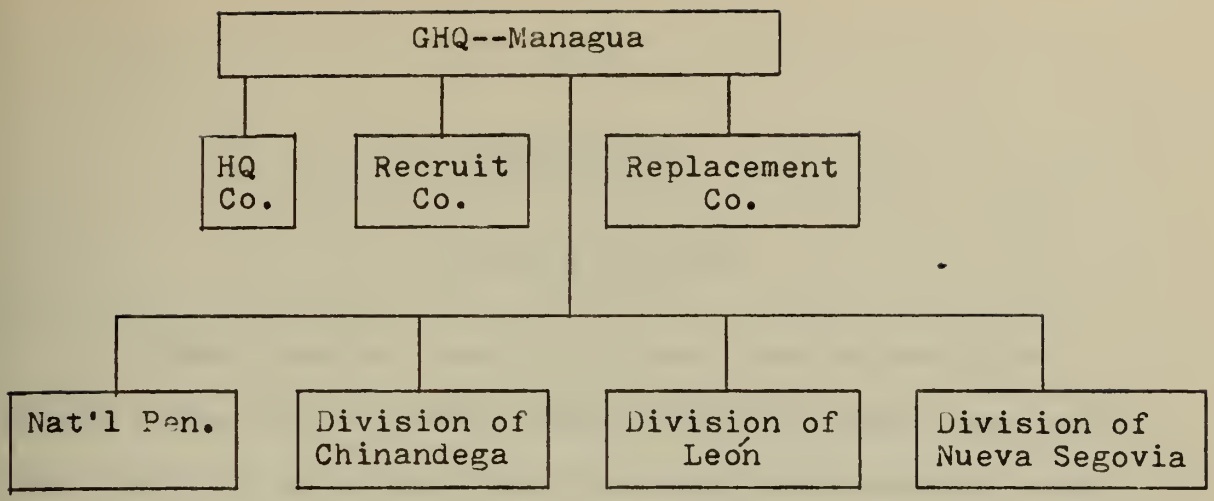

Fig. 1.--Organizational Chart, January, 1928

Notes: a. A Military Division territorially corresponded to a Political Department. The term Military Division was subsequently changed to Military Department.

b. The Divisions of Nueva Segovia and Estelí were combined on December 31, 1927, into the Division of Nueva Segovia.

Source: General Order No. 2, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, January 1, 1928, Box 10, File Folder 17, FRC.

CHAPTER IV

MISSION IN FLUX

Under General Beadle the Guard was primarily a police force rather than a combat force.[1] Beadle was not only leery of using his few relatively untrained and inexperienced guardsmen against the Sandinistas, but he firmly believed that the principal duty of the Guardia was to carry out the functions of a rural and urban police--not fight the "bandits."[2] That was the Marines' business. This concept of the separate missions of the two forces was clearly stated in a memorandum written at Guardia Headquarters at the end of 1928:

> The Brigade forces [the Marine Second Brigade] have yet to accomplish one of the most important parts of their mission that is to clear the territory of Nicaragua of bandit troops [emphasis added], which bandit troops are at this time still operating and are of such strength that they are more than an ordinary police force can handle [emphasis added]. At such time as the situation in Nicaragua becomes only a police problem or the Guardia comes up to a strength of 2500 men with a Mobile Operating Battalion [described in a preceeding paragraph as 15

---

[1]Beadle served as the Jefe Director from July 11, 1927, to March 10, 1929.

[2]Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps, p. 433.

officers and 400 men to be operational by the end of 1929], it is apparent that the Marine forces are still necessary. . .[3]

As the following tables show, the Guardia Nacional conducted its operations during Beadle's tenure as jefe director in accordance with his perception of its mission.

TABLE 2

GN and USMC FORCES in the NORTHERN and CENTRAL AREAS
(during the period July 11, 1927, through March 10, 1929)

Date	GN Total Strength	Percent in NA-CA[a]	Date	2nd Bde Total Strength[b]	Percent in NA-CA
Oct. 1, 1927	484	27	———	———	———
Dec. 31, 1927	658	23	———	———	———
Mar. 31, 1928	952	10	Mar. 31, 1928	3525	52
Jun. 30, 1928	1347	11	Jun. 30, 1928	4378	42
Feb. 28, 1929	2050	26	Mar. 2, 1929	3916	44

NA = Northern Area CA = Central Area Bde = Brigade

---

[3] "Brief on Guardia Nacional," unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, December 10, 1928, Box 10 File Folder 14, FRC. Although the author of this memorandum is not indicated, it is reasonable to assume that it reflects Beadle's thoughts on the matter--a command tends, inevitably, to adopt the philosophy of its commander, particularly the headquarters staff. It is interesting to speculate on whom the "brief" was intended for--presumably someone outside the Guard organization. The Mobile Operating Battalion never did become a reality. The best the Guard managed was a mobile company--Company "M"--with an average strength of two officers and thirty enlisted. The officer most closely associated with Company "M" was 1st. Lt., later General, "Chesty" Puller (Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 37.).

TABLE 3

PATROL CONTACTS
(during the period July 11, 1927, through March 10, 1929)

Date	USMC Contacts[c]	Percent in NA-CA	USMC-GN Contacts[c]	Percent in NA-CA	GN[c] Contacts	Percent in NA-CA
Jul.-Dec., 1927[d]	19	95	17	100	1	?
Jan.-Dec., 1928[d]	37	92	15	80	9	67
Jan.-Mar.10, 1929[d]	3	100	0	0	3	100

NA = Northern Area CA = Central Area

Notes for Tables 2 and 3:

a. The Northern Area is composed of the Departments of Nueva Segovia and Estelí. The Central Area is composed of the Departments of Jinotega and Matagalpa (See APPENDIX III, Fig. 2).

b. The 2nd Brigade total strength includes all USMC and USN units attached to the 2nd Brigade, but does not include Marines nor Navy serving in the Guardia Nacional.

c. USMC contacts are contacts with the enemy involving patrols composed of Marines only; USMC-GN contacts involved mixed composition patrols; GN contacts involved Marine or Nicaraguan led patrols composed of nationals only.

d. For 1927: two additional contacts occurred in the Northern Area whose patrol composition is either composite or GN, and the location of the single GN contact is unknown. For 1928: the location of one USMC contact is unknown; the location of two of the USMC-GN contacts is unknown; the location of three of the GN contacts is unknown; two additional contacts occurred in the Northern Area whose patrol composition is either composite or GN, and two more contacts occurred whose patrol composition is either composite or GN and whose location is unknown.

e. Probable location error for USMC-GN and GN contacts is ± 10 percent.

Sources: The data was compiled from: "Principal Engagements the Marine Detachments have had with Bandits in Nicaragua since May 15, 1927;" "Casualties in

Nicaragua from December 23, 1926, to February 8, 1928;" "Bandit contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," all located in File "N," HQ, USMC; from the 1928 and 1929 Guardia Nacional Annual Reports, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; from the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim; and from Nicaragua Microfilm Reels Nos. 11 and 14, held at Historical Division, Reference Section, Headquarters, USMC, Washington, D.C. Hereinafter referred to as Nicaragua Microfilm Reels, HQ, USMC.

As is indicated by TABLE 3, the Sandinistas' area of activity in 1927-1929 was mainly located in the Northern and Central Areas of Nicaragua.[4] Beadle, believing that the "bandits" were the Marines' concern and not the Guard's, stationed at most a little over one-quarter of his available manpower there and at times as few as one-tenth of his force in those regions. The forces he did deploy to the Northern and Central Areas were not as heavily engaged as the Marines assigned to the same areas, leading one to conclude that they were employed more in a police than a combat role. From July 11, 1927, through March 10, 1929, patrols involving Marines (USMC and USMC-GN) encountered the enemy eighty-four times (known locations and known patrol compositions) in the Northern and Central Areas. For the same period of time in

---

[4]The Sandinistas' base of operations was located in the Northern and Central Areas, particularly in the Eastern sections of the Departments of Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, and Matagalpa, throughout the intervention. Until January, 1928, Sandino's headquarters and main arsenal was at the mountain redoubt of El Chipote, located about ten miles north of Quilalí in the Department of Nueva Segovia. A Marine-Guardia offensive, intended to remove the "bandit" threat for once and for all, forced Sandino to abandon El Chipote in January, 1928.

the same region, members of the Guardia Nacional (GN and USMC-GN patrols) were involved in only thirty-eight contacts with the Sandinistas (known locations and known patrol compositions). In other words, Marines were involved in more than twice as many engagements as were guardsmen. Casualties also reflect the extent to which the forces were engaged. The Marines, throughout Nicaragua, suffered 70 casualties (KIA, DOW, and WIA) during the time period, and the Guard sustained 26 casualties (inclusive of Marine personnel serving with the Guardia Nacional). Although estimates of enemy casualties are always unreliable, tneir general trend, in this case, illustrates that the Marines and not the Guardia were doing most of the fighting. Of the 59 "Marine only" contacts occurring during the period, 55 are known to have taken place in the Northern and Central Areas. These 55 contacts resulted in 113 "bandit" casualties. Figures for "Guard only" contacts are 9 known contacts in the Northern and Central Areas causing 12 enemy casualties.[5]

---

[5]Data compiled from: "Principal Engagements the Marine Detachments have had with Bandits in Nicaragua since May 15, 1927;" "Casualties in Nicaragua from December 23, 1926, to February 8, 1928;" "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931;" "Marine Corps Casualties in Nicaragua: January 1, 1927, to January 2, 1933 (corrected copy);" all located in File "N," HQ, USMC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim. The 70 Marine casualties and the 26 Guard casualties account for all Marine and Guard casualties that occurred during the period except for 3 Marine aviators of the Second Brigade. "Guard only" inflicted enemy casualties do not include those designated as "estimated" (none so listed for this period) in the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua." Casualties inflicted by "Marine only" patrols include those listed as "estimated."

The foregoing compilation of contact and distribution data illustrates that the Marines were not only deployed to the "bandit" infested area but were also actively engaged in seeking them out. The Guard, in accordance with its commander's policy, was not so utilized.[6]

During 1927-1928, this separation of duties, apparently, was an agreeable arrangement that satisfied the State Department, the Guard, and the Second Brigade. The State Department's prevailing concern was the holding of a "free, fair, and impartial election" in 1928.[7] To make such a desire a reality, the Legation believed that one of the essential steps was the removal of the nation's police forces from political control. The Legation thought this could best be accomplished by having the American commanded National Guard assume the police duties throughout the

---

[6]Another interpretation can be gleaned from the data. One can draw the conclusion that the Marines instead of being "more heavily" engaged were just "more sloppily" engaged than was the Guard. After all, they had more contacts (ambushed?) and had more casualties. However, given the relative level of experience and training of the two forces, even though at times the Corps was using recruits with only six weeks of training (Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 109), this conclusion would be tenuous. It seems much more likely that the Marines were out "beating the bush" looking for the Sandinistas; and when they found them, they sought to maintain contact, not break it.

[7]The Personal Representative of the President of the United States in Nicaragua (Stimson) to General Moncada, May 11, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 345.

country. Beadle evidently agreed that this was a proper mission for the Guard as that organization began to take over the police service in August, 1927. A year later, it had replaced all other police forces in the Republic.[8] The Marines, on the other hand, committed by the Tipitapa Settlement to disarming all the combatants that had participated in the Civil War, directed their attention towards Sandino's band. Since the settlement also required the Marines to remain in Nicaragua until at least the 1928 elections, the division of labor between the Guardia Nacional and the Second Brigade was acceptable to Generals Feland and Beadle.

Following the 1928 elections, relations between the two commanders began to deteriorate. It seems probable that the conflict between the two officers began as a result of Congressional pressure in the United States to have the Marines withdrawn. With the successful completion of the supervision of the elections, one of the committments the United States had assummed at Tipitapa had been met and opposition to the continued presence of American troops

---

[8]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 164-65.

in Nicaragua increased.[9] Both the commander of the Special Service Squadron (now Rear Admiral D.F. Sellers) and General Feland favored a reduction in force to approximately that of the pre-election levels of early 1928.[10] The willingness of the senior American commanders to reduce the number of Marines in Nicaragua reflected the Congressional opposition to the intervention as well as Seller's conviction that Sandino's movement had been severely damaged by his inability to disrupt the 1928 elections.[11]

---

[9]The Senate in February, 1929, nearly succeeded in attaching a "rider" to the 1929 Naval Appropriations Bill that would have prevented the allocation of funds for the support of the Marines in Nicaragua (Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 135.). The Senate had made a similar attempt in 1928, but the proposed admendments to the appropriations bill had been defeated with the help of Senator William E. Borah, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, who believed that the Marines were needed to meet the U.S. obligation to supervise the 1928 elections (Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 135.).

[10]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 172.

[11]Ibid. Sandino was unable to make a concentrated effort to prevent the 1928 elections. This is evident from the number and location of contacts that occurred during the period September 23 to November 4, 1928 (registration of voters took place from September 23 to October 7 and the election was held on November 4). There was a total of five contacts during this period (all the result of Marine patrols). All occurred in October in the remote Department of Nueva Segovia ("Bandit contacts in Nicaragua from April 1, 1928 to April 30, 1931," File "N," HQ, USMC.). Although contacts indicate more where the Marines and Guardia were rather than where the Sandinistas were, with 432 polling places scattered throughout the Republic, it would seem that a serious attempt to disrupt the elections would have resulted in many more and more widely distributed clashes with the security forces than the five that occurred in Nueva Segovia. Also the five contacts did not represent an abnormally high incidence rate. The total number of

On January 3, 1929, Rear Admiral Sellers recommended that the Marine force be reduced to 3500 men.[12] It is obvious that this proposed decrease in the operational strength of the Second Brigade could only have one result for the Guardia--more combat. Beadle, as indicated by the December memorandum, opposed the troop withdrawal and its consequence--an increased combat role for the Guard. He could argue, and probably did, that the Second Brigade had not fulfilled the obligation incurred at Tipitapa to disarm Sandino, that his organization did not have the requisite strength to take over combat operations as well as to continue to perform police duties, and that the Guard, having been utilized as a police force for a year and a half, had neither the training nor the experience necessary for a combat force. The December memorandum suggests that Beadle would have preferred a moratorium of one year on Marine withdrawals. He didn't get it. As the following table shows, the strength of the Marine 2nd Brigade was reduced by two-thirds during 1929.

---

contacts in September was 2; in November, 4; and December, 3 ("Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," File "N," HQ, USMC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.).

[12]Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 3, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 549.

TABLE 4

2nd BRIGADE STRENGTH, 1929

Date	Force Level[a]
Jan. 5, 1929	4873
Feb. 2, 1929	4084
Mar. 2, 1929	3916
April 6, 1929	3735
May 4, 1929	3359
Jun. 1, 1929	2900
Jul. 6, 1929	2882
Aug. 3, 1929	2811
Sept. 1, 1929	2008
Oct. 5, 1929	1724
Nov. 2, 1929	1709
Dec. 7, 1929	1682

Notes: a. Force Level includes all Marine and Navy personnel attached to the 2nd Brigade. It does not include personnel attached to the Nicaraguan National Guard.

Sources: "2nd Brigade Consolidated Distribution Reports," and "2nd Brigade Record of Events," Nicaragua Microfilm Reels Nos. 11 and 18, respectively, HQ, USMC.

Feland's views regarding the withdrawal of Marines and its consequences were contrary to Beadle's. Feland had agreed with Sellers in November on a troop reduction,[13] and he felt that the Guardia should be out in the field fighting the "bandits" rather than just performing police functions.[14] This difference of opinion concerning the "proper mission" of the Guardia in the post-election period was abetted by other conflicting convictions which combined to increase the discord between the two officers.

---

[13]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 172.

[14]Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps, p. 438.

In early 1929, disagreements arose between the Brigade commander and the Guard commander over three other matters. One concerned the proposed Nicaraguan amendments to the December 22, 1927, Guardia agreement between the United States and Nicaragua. Feland and Sellers believed that the amendments would not inhibit the director's control over the Guard nor endanger its non-partisan nature (see supra, pp. 58-59). On the other hand, both Beadle and the American minister, Eberhardt, wanted the agreement passed in its original form to insure a strong and independent National Guard. Secondly, Feland, with Sellers' support, wanted the Guard to be a subordinate unit of the Second Brigade rather than an autonomous organization responsible (at least nominally) to the president of Nicaragua. Beadle preferred his independent status.[15] The third item of contention involved President Moncada's formation of his own Liberal army separate from the Guardia. Moncada had proposed to Admiral Sellers in January the creation of a force of "500 carefully selected volunteers" to assist the Marines in "bandit" suppression in the Northern departments.[16] General Feland, anxious to have Nicaraguans engaged in field operations and contending that the native led volunteers had the ability to detect Sandino sympathizers, supported

---

[15]Kamman, Search for Stability, pp. 174-77.

[16]Eberhardt to Kellogg, January 3, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 549.

President Moncada in his desire to raise the force. Beadle and Eberhardt opposed the creation of such an armed force outside the control of the National Guard as a violation of the December 22nd agreement that had established the Guardia as the sole military and police force in the Republic. Moncada, supported by Feland, won out, and one column of about ninety men was ready for operations on January 27. A second column of approximately the same size began operations on the 19th of February. Although the volunteers eventually expanded to a force of about 300 men, they failed to be any better at catching "bandits" than the Guard or the Marines. They were disbanded in August, 1929, without any notable success.[17]

As a result of this inter-organizational squabbling and Feland's opposition to the American minister's views (which represented State Department objectives), Eberhardt recommended that both officers be relieved.[18] Beadle

---

[17]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 190-94, 235; and Eberhardt to Kellogg, March 16, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 552-54. Moncada's volunteers were a hybrid unit. They were under the administrative control of the Guardia (funds, equipment, and training) and under the operational control of the commander of the Second Brigade (see Eberhardt to Kellogg, March 16, 1929, above.).

[18]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 236-38.

was replaced on March 10th and Feland was relieved on March 26, 1929.[19]

The new commander of the National Guard, Colonel Douglas C. McDougal, USMC, had been a former commander of the Haitian constabulary, the Garde d' Haiti. He quickly began to make operational and organizational changes in the Guardia Nacional. With the Marine reduction in force inevitable, McDougal (Major General, GN) accepted the Guard's dual role as both a police and a military force. He sent the Guard out into the field to engage the Sandinistas. He decreased the number of personnel assigned to the guerrilla-free departments along the West Coast and in Southern Nicaragua and used them to reinforce the Northern, Central, and Eastern Areas as the Marines began to withdraw from those regions. By the end of July, 1929, McDougal had established thirty-four Guardia Nacional outposts in the area of the heaviest "bandit" activity--the Northern and

---

[19]Eberhardt attributed the source of the friction between Beadle and Feland to the actions of General Frank R. McCoy, U.S. Army (Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 177, n. 18.). McCoy was the American member and Chairman of the National Electoral Commission that oversaw the 1928 elections. The State Department had, in March, 1928, persuaded Díaz to relinquish the president's position as commander-in-chief of the Guardia to the chairman of the electoral commission during election periods (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 228.). While McCoy had praise for his temporary subordinate, Beadle, for the performance of the National Guard during the election, he was extremely critical of Feland's continuing failure to disarm Sandino (Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 138.).

Central Departments of Nueva Segovia, Estelí, Jinotega, and Matagalpa (See APPENDIX III, Fig. 2).[20] The new Second Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Dion Williams, was pleased with the Guard's new found enthusiasm for combat and with the actions of its jefe director. In a report to Eberhardt, he wrote:

> The Guardia Nacional shows continued and what is believed to be lasting improvement.
> The energetic measures taken by General McDougal, and his appreciation of what the true role [emphasis added] of the Guardia should be, has [sic] contributed greatly to our recent successes.[21]

The extent to which McDougal accepted the task of "bandit" suppression as a mission of the Guardia is indicated by the change in force distribution that took place subsequent to Beadle's departure from Nicaragua:

TABLE 5

GN FORCE DISTRIBUTION
December 31, 1927, to December 31, 1929

Date	GN Total Strength	Percent in NA-CA[a]	Percent in WA-SA[a]	Percent in EA[a]	Total Percent[b]
Dec.31, 1927	658	23	33	0	56
Jun.30, 1928	1347	11	25	5	41
Feb.28, 1929	2050	26	31	0	57
Aug., 1929[d]	2150	48	25	12	85
Dec.31, 1929	2219	45	26	10	81

NA = Northern Area, CA = Central Area, EA = Eastern Area, WA = Western Area, SA = Southern Area

---

[20]Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps, p. 439.

[21]The Commander of the Second Brigade, U.S.M.C. (Williams), to the Minister in Nicaragua (Eberhardt), May 6, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 565.

Notes: a. Northern Area: Departments of Nueva Segovia and Estelí
Central Area: Departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega
Eastern Area: The departments and districts on the East Coast and Eastern interior
Western and Southern Areas: The departments along the West Coast, Chontales, and the District of San Juan del Norte

b. Total percent represents the total percentage of GN strength deployed outside the Department and City of Managua. Stationed in Managua would be Department of Managua personnel, headquarters personnel, the Presidential Guard Detachment, the Band, Casuals, Replacement Company, Recruit Company, the National Penitentiary Detachment, etc. It is obvious from these figures that McDougal was successful in getting the Guard out of Managua and into the field.

c. McDougal relieved Beadle on March 10, 1929.

d. The percentages for the Aug., 1929, date are slightly in error due to the fact that the GN total strength is an estimate based on the Feb. 28, 1929, strength of 2050 and a strength on Oct. 1, 1929, of 2198.

Sources: Guardia Nacional Annual Report, 1928; Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; "Activities and Achievements of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua from the time of its reorganization to February 28, 1929," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; Hanna to Stimson, August 22, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 579; and Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 15.

In early summer 1929, General McDougal reorganized the Guard. The Republic was divided into five operational areas of responsibility each with an area commander (under Beadle there had been four areas but only the Eastern Area had been established as a semi-independent command with its

own commander). The purpose of the area commander concept was twofold: (1) it would permit a more rapid marshalling of the available area-wide resources to counter guerrilla activity than had been possible under the previous arrangement when no area commander had been assigned, and (2) by placing high ranking Guardia Nacional officers (all American) in the various areas, it was hoped this would make the Guard more visible and more responsive to the local inhabitants and officials.[22] The areas and their subordinate departments were as follows:

Northern Area
(HQ at Ocotal)
Departments:
Nueva Segovia
Estelí

Central Area
(HQ at Jinotega)
Departments:
Jinotega
Matagalpa

Western Area
(HQ at León)
Departments:
León
Chinandega

Eastern Area
(HQ at Bluefields)
Departments:
Bluefields
Districts:
Cabo Gracias a Dios
Prinzapolca
Río Grande
Siquia

Southern Area
(HQ at Granada)
Departments:
Carazo
Chontales
Granada
Masaya
Rivas
Districts:
San Juan del Norte

---

[22]"Annual Report of GN-3 Section, 3 December 1929," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. The following is an excerpt from the GN-3's (Operations and Training) report:

> "The reorganization decentralized the organization in Managua and placed senior and experienced officers at the Area Headquarters. . . Having an Area Commander thusly located enables quicker decisions pertaining to operations to be made and it also places a senior officer and representative of the Jefe Director, Guardia Nacional, in sections where the officials and public can easily reach and confer with him instead of visiting Managua to see the Jefe Director. . ."

The Department of Managua, the Managua City Police Company, the Presidential Guard, and the National Penitentiary Guard were under the operational control of General Headquarters in Managua. The Southern Area was never established as an area command, and the Western Area ceased operating as an area command on May 3, 1930. The departments and districts assigned to these two areas functioned independently of each other, reporting directly to General Headquarters. McDougal completed the reorganization of the Guard by August, 1929. The new organization remained in effect until U.S. forces withdrew from Nicaragua in 1933.[23]

During its first two years, the Guard had undergone, essentially, a single change in command and one reorganization. It had grown from under 100 men to over 2000. Its primary mission had been police work leaving the suppression of "banditry" to the Marines. When the Marine forces began to be reduced following the 1928 elections, the Guard was forced to assume more of a combat role. McDougal, taking command in March, 1929, accepted this mission as a proper one for the Guard and began deploying his forces into the "bandit" areas. Thereafter, military operations against the Sandinistas became more and more a Guardia responsibility as the Marines continued to withdraw from the guerrilla areas.

---

[23]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER V

MILITARY OPERATIONS

The conduct of military operations prior to the summer of 1929 had been, for the most part, a function of the Marine forces in Nicaragua (See TABLES 2 and 3, CHAPTER IV). During this period, the Marines had launched three major offensives against the Sandinistas--one aimed at El Chipote and two along the Coco River (See APPENDIX III, Fig. 1).[1] The El Chipote offensive in December-January of 1927-1928 was meant to capture or destroy the Sandinistas and thus rid Nicaragua of Sandino and his followers. It failed. Sandino abandoned El Chipote before his lines of retreat could be blocked and fled south to San Rafael del Norte (about ten miles northwest of Jinotega). In April, 1928, the Marines, hoping to force Sandino into Honduras and keep him there to

---

[1] A "major offensive" must be understood within the context of the Nicaraguan "war." The campaign against Sandino was one of incessant patrols and intermittent contacts. It was a platoon war of small unit actions. An assemblage of troops greater than a company in strength constituted a large concentration for a "major" offensive. For El Chipote, the combined Marine and Guardia forces numbered about 300 (Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 103.). The two patrols down the Coco River consisted of about 100 men each (Nalty, Marines in Nicaragua, pp. 24-25.).

prevent disruption of the 1928 elections, organized an expedition up the Coco River into "bandit" country. From April through May, the Marines sought to make contact with the guerrillas--up the Coco River to the Huaspuc, up the Huaspuc and then overland to Bocay--largely without success. Arriving at Bocay on May 31, the patrol could claim only four "bandits" wounded for all its efforts. Not only had Sandino not been forced into Honduras, but he had succeeded, in April, in raiding the gold mines in the San Pedro Pis Pis region. Following these forays into Northeastern Nicaragua, Sandino moved into the remote, dense jungle region between the Bocay and Coco Rivers establishing a base area near Poteca (twenty-five miles east of El Jícaro, on the Coco River). The Sandinista concentration at Poteca was the objective of the second Coco River offensive. On July 26, in the middle of the rainy season, the Marines departed Bocay by boat via the already flooded river.[2] Enroute to Poteca, the patrol encountered the "bandits" twice, inflicting seventeen casualties and losing one killed and three wounded. The Marines occupied Poteca on the 17th of August. The offensive had succeeded in its goal of dispersing the "bandits" and denying them a permanent, secure base of operations.[3] During the remainder

---

[2]The rainy season in Nicaragua is from the end of April through October.

[3]This account of the Marine offensives of 1928 is taken largely from Nalty, Marines in Nicaragua, pp. 20-26.

of the year, the Marines engaged the Sandinistas fourteen times, but these contacts were the result of daily patrols rather than of any new "major offensive."[4] This was to be the pattern of operations for the Marines for the rest of their period of active participation in the campaign against Sandino--vigorous, aggressive, and continuous patrolling. Major offensives from the end of 1928 on would be the responsibility of the Guardia Nacional.

The Guardia Nacional considered four plans to combat the Sandinista movement.[5] One involved closing the border with Honduras. The "bandits" main infiltration routes of arms and supplies began along the Patuca River in Eastern and Central Honduras, at Danli in Central Honduras, and at Choluteca in Western Honduras. The Honduras government was both unwilling and unable to effectively patrol its side of the frontier despite considerable U.S. pressure that it do so. Clearly, the Guardia Nacional, with a force level of about 2000, did not have the requisite manpower to seal the long, uninhabited, jungle border with Honduras. While the closing

---

[4]"Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," File "N," HQ, USMC. These fourteen contacts were the result of "Marine only" patrols. After May, 1928, no composite patrol had any more contacts in 1928 (Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.).

[5]The following discussion of the Guardia's overall plan for opposing Sandino is taken from Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 29-30, 34-38.

of the frontier was most desirable, it was also impossible and the plan was rejected. A second alternative was the concentration of forces to be directed against the "bandits" in a series of what today would be called "search-and-destroy missions" to ferret out and eliminate the Sandinistas. This strategy had the unhappy effect of uncovering the rear areas due to the Guard's lack of sufficient personnel to both provide security and undertake a full scale offensive against the guerrillas. Also, as the Marine attempts of 1928 had shown, Sandino was hard to catch. As a consequence, this alternative was also discarded. A third consideration was the garrisoning of as many towns and villages as the Guard's limited forces would permit, thereby placing the guard on the defensive and leaving the initiative with Sandino. This was an unsatisfactory situation, and the scheme was dropped. The plan that was finally adopted was a fusion of the second and third alternatives--"combining an active defense with offensive operations." The "active defense" consisted of stationing the largest portion of the Guard in the "bandit" areas of North and Central Nicaragua (See TABLE 5, CHAPTER IV) to provide physical security for the inhabitants by conducting daily patrols in the vicinity of the outpost. Thus, any move by the Sandinistas to raid a town or village would, hopefully, be detected by the local garrison's patrol activities. Offensive operations would be mounted as the guerrilla situation and

manpower permitted. Personnel for these search-and-destroy missions would be obtained by reducing defensive forces to the absolute minimum commensurate with the "bandit" threat in any particular area or department. The goal of each area commander was to free as much of his force as possible for offensive operations. The Guard was not entirely satisfied with this compromise plan for the overall conduct of the campaign against Sandino; but given the limited force that the Nicaraguan government was willing and able to support, the Guard felt it was the best plan that could be implemented.[6] According to one of the Guardia Nacional's chiefs of staff, Major Julian C. Smith, USMC, the best solution would have been a plan embodying Beadle's concept for a Mobile Operating Battalion. The success of Lt. Puller's roving patrol (Company "M") indicated that a larger, mobile force whose only mission would be to seek contact with the Sandinistas combined with the "active defense" operations of the scattered outposts would have been the most effective procedure for combating Sandino. The mobile force would have consisted of

---

[6]From the force level of 93 officers and 1136 enlisted established by the December 22, 1927, agreement, the authorized strength of the Guardia was increased in June, 1928, to 246 officers and 2000 enlisted (Letter from President Díaz to Sr. Jefe Director de la Guardia Nacional, Managua, June 10, 1928, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 216.). In February, 1931, the authorized strength was again increased to 204 officers and 2150 enlisted after having been reduced to 160 officers and 1650 enlisted in December, 1930 (Hanna to Stimson, December 13, 1930, Foreign Relations, 1930, III, pp. 691-92; Stimson to Hanna, February 14, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, p. 844; and Hanna to Stimson, March 12, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, p. 846.).

of 14 officers and 210 men, divided among 8 roving patrols (2 each to the Northern, Central, and Eastern Areas, and 1 each to the Departments of León and Chinandega), and a replacement company of 3 officers and 30 men. This force was never organized because the funds (estimated at $8900 per month) for its operation were never appropriated by the Nicaraguan government.[7]

It is the opinion of this writer that the strategy the Guardia Nacional accepted as the only one possible under the constrictions imposed by a limited budget and manpower could not have resulted in the defeat of Sandino and that it was not intended to do so. The inhibiting factor was money. To the Marines in the Guard, there wasn't enough of it, and without more funds the Guard was unable to increase its personnel strength to a level its American commanders deemed necessary to dissolve the Sandinista movement. Hence, the Guardia Nacional adopted an essentially defensive strategy,

---

[7]It is interesting to note that in a book on guerrilla warfare published nearly thirty-five years after the Marine experience in Nicaragua, the problem of concentrating against the guerrilla or dispersing to protect one's own vital areas is resolved with much the same solution the Guard devised in its plan for active defense combined with the mobile operating force. In that book, the author's solution to concentration versus dispersion was a strategy that would enable the anti-guerrilla forces to secure their own base areas while preventing or delaying the guerrilla from forming his own (See John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War [Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1966], pp. 78-80.). The Guard's active defense and mobile operating force would have done just that.

and, as Clausewitz has said, the object of defense is to preserve. The Guard sought to preserve the areas it did control by containing, not defeating, Sandino in the remote, backlands of North-Central Nicaragua. The establishment of outposts throughout the Northern and Central Areas, the active defense, and the conduct of limited offensives when conditions permitted, all were meant to keep Sandino in the wilderness and prevent him from extending his control to the towns and villages. It is this writer's belief that such a strategy did not have as its purpose the defeat of Sandino.[8]

---

[8]Estimates of the force level required to defeat Sandino were in considerable excess of those available to the Guard. General Feland in June, 1928, estimated that 4000 Marines would be required but that 10,000 to 12,000 would do it quicker and provide better security (John J. Tierney, Jr., "U.S. Intervention in Nicaragua, 1927-1933: Lessons for Today," Orbis, XIV, No. 4 [1971], p. 1018.). An officer who served with the Second Brigade estimated the force required at 20,000 (Vernon Edgar Megee, "United States Military Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-1932" [unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Texas, 1963], p. 218.). President Moncada believed that 5000 Guardia would be needed to decisively defeat Sandino (The President of Nicaragua [Moncada] to the Secretary of State, November 7, 1930, Foreign Relations, 1930, III, p. 680.). Forces in excess of 10,000 may have been required to eliminate the Sandinistas to the last man, but it seems to this writer that a larger Mobile Operating Force than the one contemplated by the Guard would have so harassed and harried the Sandinistas that they would have been pushed back deep into the wilderness or across the Honduras border. Sporadic raids would not have been stopped, but the Sandino movement would have been effectively destroyed. General Feland's and President Moncada's estimates of a total force of 4000-5000 seems reasonable.

The Guard commenced its campaign against Sandino in the spring of 1929 when it began relieving the Marines of patrol duties. The Marines, as the table below indicates, withdrew almost entirely from the Eastern Area (from 694 officers and men in January, 1929, to 220 in June to 117 in December). A similar reduction took place in the Western Area and more gradually so in the Northern and Central Areas. By the end of the year, the greater part of the 2nd Brigade was concentrated in the Southern Area.

TABLE 6

2nd BRIGADE FORCE DISTRIBUTION, 1929

Date	2nd Bde Total Strength[a]	Percent in NA-CA[b]	Percent in WA-SA[b]	Percent in EA[b]	Total Percent
Jan.12, 1929	4878	36	50	14	100
Feb. 2, 1929	4084	43	40	17	100
Mar. 2, 1929	3916	44	39	17	100
Apr. 6, 1929	3735	46	36	18	100
May 4, 1929	3359	47	40	13	100
Jun. 1, 1929	2900	44	48	8	100
Jul.13, 1929	2886	50	42	8	100
Aug. 3, 1929	2811	47	46	7	100
Sep. 7, 1929	2006	38	56	6	100
Oct. 5, 1929	1724	39	54	7	100
Nov. 2, 1929	1709	39	54	7	100
Dec. 7, 1929	1682	41	52	7	100

Bde = Brigade, NA = Northern Area, CA = Central Area, SA = Southern Area, WA = Western Area, EA = Eastern Area

Notes: a. The 2nd Brigade total strength includes all Marine and Navy personnel attached to the 2nd Brigade. It does not include American personnel serving with the Guardia Nacional.

b. The area designations are those used by the Guardia Nacional. The 2nd Brigade's Southern Area actually included the GN's Southern, Central, and Western Areas. The force distribution figures have been calculated to conform to the Guard's area designations.

Source: "2nd Brigade Consolidated Distribution Reports," Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No. 14, HQ, USMC.

The extent to which the Guardia replaced the Marines in conducting combat patrols is indicated by the following table of contacts for 1929:

TABLE 7

MONTHLY PATROL CONTACTS FOR 1929

Patrol Composition	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
USMC	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GN	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	6	0	5	0	5

Notes: a. No composite (USMC-GN) patrol had any contact in 1929.

b. Two additional contacts were made by Moncada's volunteer force--one in April and one in June.

c. 100 percent of the USMC contacts occurred in the Northern and Central Areas as did 88 percent of the GN contacts. The two volunteer contacts occurred in the Central Area.

Sources: "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," File "N," HQ, USMC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

The total number of contacts for the year was: USMC--7 and GN--25. All of the Marine contacts occurred in first five months of the year during the initial phases of the reduction in force and withdrawal from the "bandit" areas. The Guard, on the other hand, had seventeen of its twenty-five contacts in the last six months of 1929 corresponding to the period in which the Marine force was sharply reduced. It is clear from this data that the Guardia Nacional was performing the bulk of the active patrol operations directed against the Sandinistas by the summer of 1929.

It was a propitious time for the Guard to assume such duties, for on June 16, 1929, Sandino had crossed over the border into Honduras on his way to Mexico to personally seek the aid of the president of Mexico in providing material support for his revolution.[9] In the preceeding January, Sandino had written Mexico's President, Emilio Portes Gil, requesting permission to visit Mexico. Portes Gil discussed the matter with the American Ambassador, Morrow, to determine the American attitude.[10] The State Department considered that a Sandino in Mexico was better than a Sandino in Central America provided that the Mexican government would prevent Sandino from using Mexico as a refuge from which to abet the

---

[9]"Intelligence Memorandum, Third Battalion, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 23 July 1929," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 246.

[10]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 200-01.

revolution in Nicaragua.[11] Hence, when Mexico requested the government of Honduras to permit Sandino to pass through Honduras, the State Department informed its minister in Tegucigalpa that "the United States will interpose no objection to the transit of Sandino from Nicaragua to Mexico."[12] Not only did the State Department raise no objections to Sandino's trip to Mexico, but it also directed the Marines and the Guard not to interfere.[13] Sandino arrived in Mexico at Tapachula, Chiapas, on the 26th of June.[14] The Mexican government, as was the U.S. desire, kept him out of Mexico City. From Chiapas, the Mexican government sent Sandino to Vera Cruz, by-passing the capital, and from Vera Cruz to Mérida in the Yucatan peninsula--a long, long way from Mexico City. It was not until seven months after his arrival in Mexico that Sandino was granted an interview with President Portes Gil and former President Calles (the real power in Mexico) in Mexico City in January, 1930.[15]

---

[11]Kellogg to Morrow, February 25, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, pp. 583-84.

[12]Kellogg to Summerlin, April 11, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 585.

[13]Stimson to Morrow, May 8, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 586; and Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Clark) of a Conversation with the Mexican Ambassador (Téllez), May 17, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 587.

[14]Morrow to Stimson, June 28, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 588.

[15]Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, pp. 149, 158.

Prior to departing Nicaragua, Sandino had directed one of his lieutenants, Francisco Estrada, to carry on the revolution in his absence. However, Estrada and other leaders believed it would be more prudent to retire with the bulk of the guerrilla forces into Honduras to await Sandino's return. As a result, the Sandinista chiefs elected one Pedrón Altamirano to remain in Nicaragua with about 100 of the best armed men to continue the fight. Another band under Miguel Angel Ortez also stayed. The rest made their way across the border.[16]

---

[16] Ibid., p. 150. The Marines in the Guard had admiration for Ortez, but they wasted no such love on Altamirano. The following characterization of the two "bandit" leaders is taken from Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 69-70:

> "Miguel Angel Ortez y Guillen. . . operated constantly, always seeking contact with Marine and Guardia patrols, and was one of the few leaders of bandits who continued a fight after the first burst of fire, who ambushed patrols successfully, and who made valiant attacks on garrisons. . . .
>
> Pedro (Pedrón) Altamirano. . . was one of the most savage, cruel, and sanguinary of Sandino's leaders. . . . He avoided contact with patrols unless he had a large and certain advantage over them, and occupied himself to a large extent in looting, burning, and killing. . . . He dispersed his group widely for the purpose of subsisting it on the country, but seemed always able to concentrate it for a raid or for a fight. . . . His one great weakness as a guerrilla leader, common among the bandit chiefs, was that he failed to personally lead his men in action and to push home his attacks. He had the arts of ambush, subsisting on the country, subterfuge, surprise, rapidity and secrecy of movement, down to a fine point and his use of interior lines was masterly."

These descriptions are interesting because they indicate that the Marines did not fully understand the nature of the war they were fighting. Ortez appears as a brave leader who is praised for standing his ground and for attacking strongpoints whereas Altamirano, who seems to be the epitome of a guerrilla leader and who appears to have understood the basics of guerrilla war, is the object of disparaging remarks and the intimation that his method of fighting was somehow cowardly.

Sandino's meeting with Portes Gil and Calles resulted in no positive benefits for the revolution, and Sandino, dismayed from ever obtaining any tangible support from the Mexican government, evaded the Mexican authorities and left Mérida in late April, 1930. He arrived back in Nicaragua about mid-May.[17] His year long absence seems to have had little effect on the tempo of activity in Nicaragua. The total number of contacts with the "bandits" decreased slightly from sixty-five in 1928 to fifty-six for the period June, 1929, through May, 1930 (the approximate duration of Sandino's stay in Mexico).[18] However, Sandino's return brought an immediate increase in "bandit" operations and consequently, an increase in Guard activity also.

By summer, 1930, the Guardia Nacional had assumed all patrol duties in the Republic.[19] The Marines had been relegated to the role of a ready reserve to support the Guard if needed.[20] The stepped up campaign of the guerrillas

---

[17]"Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy," printed in Annual Reports of the Navy Department, 1930 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 101. This series hereinafter referred to as Annual Reports.

[18]"Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," File "N," HQ, USMC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

[19]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 28.

[20]Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps, p. 445. On June 7, 1930, the strength of the 2nd Brigade was 1027 ("2nd Brigade Record of Events," Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No. 18, HQ, USMC.).

following Sandino's arrival in Nicaragua was the first challenge the Guardia Nacional faced on its own. Under the guidance of its Marine officers, it performed well.[21] From June through December, 1930, the National Guard engaged the Sandinistas 85 times (as compared to the 35 encounters in the five months prior to Sandino's return) inflicting 215 casualties on the "bandits" while suffering 20 (KIA, DOW, and WIA).[22] Although the majority of these contacts occurred in the Northern and Central Areas, the following

---

[21]On June 30, 1930, out of a total officer corps (Marine and Navy) of 200 there were 17 native officers in the Guard ("Annual Report of the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, October 1, 1930," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.). U.S. Navy personnel assigned to the Guard were pharmacist mates, Navy doctors, and Navy civil engineers.

[22]"Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim. Marine patrols had only five contacts in 1930 with four out of the five occurring in the last six months of the year. The last Marine contact of the intervention took place in January, 1931 (Monthly reports on "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua," from April, 1928, through November, 1932, File "N," HQ, USMC.). Although the last report was filed in November, 1932, it seems safe to assume that there were no Marine contacts with the "bandits" in December, 1932. Composite patrols (USMC-GN) had their last "bandit" contacts in 1930. There were four and all occurred in the last six months of the year and are included in the eighty-five contacts listed above. It is, perhaps, a misnomer to label these patrols composite since in these four contacts the patrol force numbered fifteen to twenty men of which only one to three were Marines, excluding the officers (See "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," above.). Metcalf states that enlisted Marines accompanying Guardia patrols in 1930 did so in the capacity of automatic weapons men (Metcalf, A History of the United States Marine Corps, p. 443.).

table shows that in 1930 the Sandinistas were beginning to expand their area of operations:

TABLE 8

CONTACTS by AREA, 1927-1930

Year	Number of Contacts by Area[a]					Total
	NA	CA	SA[b]	EA	Unkn	
1927[c]	37	0	0	1	1	39
1928	44	10	3	0	8	65
1929	15	16	3	0	0	34
1930	53	54	16	0	2	125

NA=Northern Area, CA=Central Area, SA=Southern and Western Areas, EA=Eastern Area, Unkn=Location Unknown

Notes: a. Contacts include those involving USMC, composite, GN, and the volunteer patrols.

b. This writer has used the designation "Southern Area" for both the Western and Southern Areas. This corresponds to the designation used on distribution reports after the Western Area was dissolved as an area command in May, 1930. Prior to McDougal's reorganization in 1929, the label "Western Area" was applied to the districts and departments that McDougal divided into the Western and Southern Areas.

c. The year 1927 begins with the first contact in July at Ocotal on the 16th.

d. As indicated in an earlier table, the location error for contacts involving GN and composite patrols is ± 10 percent. This is due to the way in which this writer determined contact locations. Many were already identified by area; others could be identified by the name of the town or village near which the contact took place. When this information was not sufficient, grid locations were used by reconstructing the grid coordinates. This was done by using places of known location (town, village, etc.) plus the grid coordinates of a contact near that location. Hence the possibility of error--the contact was "near" the village but not in it, but the coordinates were

used for reconstruction as if the contact had taken place in the village. Using this method, some contacts occurred in the Pacific Ocean. USMC and volunteer contacts were identified by department; therefore, there was no location error for these contacts.

Sources: "Principal Engagements the Marine Detachments have had with Bandits in Nicaragua since May 15, 1927;" "Casualties in Nicaragua from December 23, 1926, to February 8, 1928;" "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua: from April 1, 1928, to April 30, 1931," all located in File "N," HQ, USMC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

Of the sixteen contacts that took place in the Southern Area, twelve occurred in the last six months of 1930. The location, by department, of the sixteen engagements was as follows: four in the Department of Chinandega, six in the Northern half of León, one in Southwestern Managua and one in Eastern Managua, two in Western Masaya, one in Chontales, and one as far south as the Department of Rivas.[23] Although ten of the sixteen encounters happened in what might be considered the rather remote departments of León and Chinandega, it is evident that the Guard was having difficulty restricting Sandino to the mountainous backlands of Northern Nicaragua as early as 1930. The Guard would not be any more successful in 1931 nor in 1932.

The increased "bandit" activity in the summer months of 1930 engendered a Guardia reaction in the form of a counter-offensive in August. A large search-and-destroy mission

---

[23]"Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

consisting of nine combat patrols (stretched along an east-west line) began a sweep from the region around Ocotal in a southeasterly direction towards Jinotega. The sweep did more searching than it did destroying.[24] The Sandinistas were caught in a number of contacts, but for the most part, they avoided the patrols. As Major Smith summarized in his history of the Guard:

> . . ., the most successful offensives only served to disperse the bandit groups. . ., and. . .the bandits would after a time return to their old haunts and renew their careers of loot and pillage.[25]

The Guardia's pursuit of the guerrillas during the fall of 1930 was temporarily interrupted by the Nicaraguan Congressional election held in November. Offensive operations were curtailed while the Marines and Guard provided security for the voters. Following the elections, the Guardia attempted to cut the Sandino supply lines originating in Danli, Honduras. Patrols operated in area bounded by Ocotal in the west, Cifuentes on the Honduras border in the north (about twenty miles north of El Jícaro), Poteca in the east (twenty-five miles east of El Jícaro), and by Quilalí in the south. The expedition failed to stop the flow of supplies. While the Guard was on the Honduras border

---

[24]Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, pp. 170-71.

[25]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 39.

conducting supply interdiction operations, Altamirano slipped south into the, now relatively undefended Department of Matagalpa. After raiding the department, he returned north to the Peña Blanca region of Jinotega (about twenty miles northeast of the city of Jinotega). The patrols along the border moved south in hopes of entrapping the guerrilla leader, but this effort failed. On this note, 1930 came to an end.

Operations during 1931 and 1932 continued at the quickened pace set in 1930. There were more contacts, more "bandits," more Guardsmen, and fewer Marines in 1931 and 1932 then there had been in 1930. The practice begun in 1929 of stationing the greatest portion of the Guardia in the guerrilla infested Northern and Central Areas was continued, as the following table illustrates, by McDougal's successor.

TABLE 9

GN FORCE DISTRIBUTION, 1931-1932

Date	GN Total Strength	Percent in NA-CA	Percent in SA[a]	Percent in EA	Total Percent[b]
Feb. 28, 1931	2051	54	16	9	79
Sep. 30, 1931	2463	60	14	12	86
Dec. 26, 1931	2487	59	14	13	86
Apr. 30, 1932	2550	54	18	13	85
Aug. 27, 1932	2567	54	18	13	85
Dec. 24, 1932	2645	47	18	12	77

NA=Northern Area, CA=Central Area, SA=Southern Area, EA=Eastern Area

Notes: a. The Southern Area includes all the departments and districts of the former Southern and Western Areas.

b. Total percent represents the total percentage of GN strength deployed outside the Department and City of Managua (See TABLE 5, note b).

Sources: "Consolidated report showing distribution of all troops, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, as of 28 February 1931," Box 10, File Folder 7, FRC; "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1930, and Ending September 30, 1931," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; and "Distribution of Troops of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 21 December 1931 to Date [24 December 1932]," File "N," HQ, USMC.

During 1931, not only were there more contacts than in any previous year, but they were also more widely distributed. The Guard was less and less able to restrict Sandino's activities to the remote areas of Nicaragua. In April, 1931, the Sandinistas terrorized the East Coast to such an extent that ships of the Special Service Squadron were sent to Cabo Gracias a Dios, Puerto Cabezas, and Bluefields. Marines and sailors from the USS Asheville landed at Puerto Cabezas and at Bluefields from the USS Sacramento. Prior to the arrival of the naval forces at Cabo Gracias a Dios, the "bandits" had been successful in sacking the village. During the summer, Sandino kept eight columns in the field raiding the Northern departments.[26] In the following November, "the supreme effort of organized banditry was made."[27] Reinforced groups of Sandinistas concentrated in the Departments of León and Chinandega to sever the railroad line between Managua and the major West Coast

---

[26]Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 204.

[27]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 66.

port of Corinto. On November 22nd, the "bandits" began the campaign by seizing the town of Chichigalpa (on the railroad) located about eight miles southeast of Chinandega. The arrival of a Guardia patrol from Chinandega forced the "bandits" to flee. During the emergency in the two departments, the State Department authorized the use of the Marines in Managua as train guards, and President Moncada raised a force of 150 auxiliaries to operate, under the Guard's control, in León and Chinandega for three months.[28] The Guardia also increased its strength in the two departments by sending reinforcements from the Northern and Central Area garrisons. As a result of these efforts, the Guard was able to keep the line of communications open between Managua and the sea, and the "bandit" plan failed.

In 1932, Guard contacts with Sandinistas exceeded the previous high set in 1931. The Guard averaged nearly fifteen contacts per month. They occurred all over the country from Brown's Camp near Puerto Cabezas on the East Coast to San Antonio in the Department of Chinandega in the West, and from

---

[28] Ibid., p. 18. Since June, 1931, the Marines, reduced to an "instruction battalion" and the aviation detachment, had been concentrated in Managua. On September 1, 1931, there were, exclusive of Marines serving with the National Guard, 754 Marines in Nicaragua (The Secretary of the Navy [Adams] to the Secretary of State, February 24, 1931; and The Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs [Thurston] to Assistant Secretary of State [White], September 12, 1931, both in Foreign Relations, 1931, II, pp. 845, 858.).

Jalapa on the Honduras border in Nueva Segovia to Santo Domingo in central Chontales in the South.[29] In the spring, the "bandits" tried again to cut the rail lines between Managua and Corinto and failed. The weeks preceeding the November presidential elections were an exceptionally active period. In the last week of October and in the first six days of November (the election was held on November 6th), the Guardia engaged the Sandinistas nineteen times. The elections were held successfully with a minimum of Marine assistance, and by December a definite lull in "bandit" activity occurred with the Guard encountering Sandino's forces only six times during that month.[30]

An overview of the 1931-1932 campaign against Sandino is provided in the following tables:

TABLE 10

CONTACTS by AREA, 1931-1932

Year	Contacts by Area[a]					Total
	NA	CA	SA[b]	EA	Unkn	
1931	80	25	16	12	9	142
1932	57	72	28	14	5	176

NA=Northern Area, CA=Central Area, SA=Southern Area
EA=Eastern Area, Unkn=Location Unknown

---

[29]"Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

[30]Ibid.

TABLE 11

CASUALTIES,[c] 1931-1932

Year	USMC[d]	GN[e]	Sandinistas
1931	2	46	445
1932	0	80	469

Notes, TABLES 10 AND 11:

a. All contacts in 1931 and 1932 were by Marine or native led Guard patrols consisting of nationals only, except for one contact in the Northern Area in 1931 that was the result of a Marine patrol.

b. The Southern Area includes all the departments and districts of the former Southern and Western Areas.

c. Casualties include killed in action, died of wounds, and wounded in action.

d. USMC casualties are exclusive of Marine personnel serving with the Guard.

e. GN casualties include Marines serving with the Guard but do not include auxiliary forces and civilian guides serving with the Guard (three such casualties in 1931 and nine in 1932).

f. All Sandinista casualties were inflicted by Marine or native led Guard patrols consisting of nationals only.

g. As Sandinista casualties for GN contacts Nos. 317 and 334 (1931) were listed in the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua" as "not verified" and "estimated" (as printed in Smith, et al.), the 1932 Guardia Nacional Annual Report was used as a source for the "bandit" casualties for these two contacts.

h. For total casualties, 1927-1932, see APPENDIX II, TABLE 3.

Sources: Monthly report on "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua, from April, 1928, to November, 1932;" "Marine Corps Casualties in Nicaragua: January 1, 1927, to

January 2, 1933 (corrected copy)," both located in File "N," HQ, USMC; "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1931, and ending September 30, 1932," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

As the information above indicates, the Sandinistas expanded their operations to the whole of Nicaragua in 1931 and 1932. The Guard was unable to contain the bandit activities to just the Northern and Central Areas. With a total force level of about 2500, responsible for the defense of the entire country, such a task was probably impossible. Due to its limited manpower and extensive responsibilities, the Guard found itself reacting to Sandino's forays rather than acting to prevent them. However, when the Guard and the "bandits" did clash, as the casualty figures show, the native guardsmen, under Marine leadership, performed well. The Marines were successful in providing the Guard with a competent enlisted soldiery; but as the following chapter illustrates, they were considerably less successful in developing a trained and experienced corps of officers.

CHAPTER VI

TRAINING

The goal of the officers and noncommissioned officers of the Marine Corps assigned to the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment was to develop a Nicaraguan led and manned constabulary that would be both professionally competent and, hopefully, apolitical. The Marines believed that a period of ten years would be required to train the Guard. However, following the change in administration in the United States (Coolidge to Hoover) in 1929, it became apparent to the members of the National Guard Detachment that withdrawal of all American forces from Nicaragua would occur much sooner than in ten years.[1] The Marines relinquished command of the Guard to native officers, on January 1, 1933, just one day before the United States withdrew all its remaining forces from Nicaragua. On the 2nd of January, 1933, the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, organized five and one half years before, ceased to exist.

---

[1]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. v, 147.

Personnel for this detachment were originally selected from volunteers among Marine forces already stationed in Nicaragua. At some later date, the Marine Corps changed this policy and chose "volunteers" from the entire body of the Corps.[2] The Marine Corps seems not to have established any rigid qualifications for personnel being assigned to the Guard nor have developed any training program for these future Guardia officers prior to their deployment to Nicaragua.[3] In light of the fact that for much of the intervention up to two-thirds of the Marine Corps was stationed outside the United States (China, Guam, Nicaragua, Haiti, Cuba, Philippines, and the Canal Zone), this was not surprising. The Corps was stretched thin just meeting its committments.[4] Training was

---

[2]Megee, "United States Military Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-1932," p. 167. Millett reports from an interview with Lt. General Julian C. Smith (a former chief of staff of the Guardia) that Marine Corps officers were expected to "volunteer" when their turn came due to be rotated to Nicaragua (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 171.).

[3]M. Dean Havron, et al., Constabulary Capabilities for Low Level Conflict (McLean, Va.: Human Sciences Research, Inc., 1969), p. 68.

[4]"Report of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corps," printed in Annual Reports [1927-1932]. When the Marine Corps was reduced in 1932 by 2700 enlisted men, the commandant reported that the Corps could no longer do its job:

> "The reduction of the enlisted strength of the Marine Corps from 18,000 to 15,343 has made it impossible for the corps to carry out its primary mission of supporting the United States Fleet by maintaining a force in readiness to operate with the fleet. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> With the present enlisted strength, the Marine Corps is not prepared to perform its allotted task in the event of a national emergency."

("Report of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corps," September 8, 1932, printed in Annual Reports [1932], p. 1163.).

to be acquired by doing. Some ability in the Spanish language as well as previous constabulary experience were desirable traits but not requirements. It is quite possible, given the small size of the Corps during the 1920's that many of the officers and noncommissioned officers that served in the Guardia may have had the latter characteristic by default rather than by plan, having either had tours with the Garde d' Haiti or with the Guardia Nacional Dominica.[5] In October, 1930, General McDougal suggested to the Major General Commandant the following qualifications for noncommissioned officers requesting duty with the Guardia: (1) completion of a satisfactory personal interview with the man's commanding officer, (2) completion of one full enlistment in the Corps, (3) possess the equivalent of a high school education, (4) have some knowledge of Spanish, (5) be temperate in habits, (6) be capable of working independently without supervision, and (7) have an excellent leadership record.[6] To what extent

---

[5]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 171. Unfortunately, the Haitians spoke French or Creole. A Guardia officer speaking French was no better off in Spanish speaking Nicaragua than a Marine who only knew "Brooklynese." The Marines commanded the Garde d' Haiti for nineteen years (1915-1934) and the Guardia Nacional Dominica for seven (1917-1924).

[6]"Annual Report of the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant," October 1, 1930, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. There was considerable incentive (beyond any "unofficial" pressure that might have been brought to bear on "volunteers") for both officers and noncommissioned officers to apply for duty with the Guard. Marine Corps personnel serving in the Guard received both their Marine pay and Guardia pay. Also, all Marine (and Navy) noncommissioned personnel served as officers in the Guardia, usually with the Guardia Nacional rank of 2nd or 1st lieutenant. Marine and Navy officers were also "frocked,"--majors and lieutenant commanders served as Guard colonels and colonels as major generals, etc.

the commandant was able or willing to implement these suggestions is not known to this writer.

The bulk of the officer corps of the Guardia Nacional was composed of Marine and Navy noncommissioned officers.[7] These men, as well as the officers, not only did not receive any training peculiar to their assignment as a Guardia officer (language, traditions, and history of Nicaragua) prior to their transfer to the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, but also when they arrived in Managua the Guardia Nacional was unable to provide them with any, at least as of late 1929. The Guard considered this situation to be both regrettable and unavoidable--as is indicated in the following memorandum written at Guardia headquarters in December, 1929:

> Junior officers (enlisted Marines and Navy men) entering the Guardia Nacional report for duty at Headquarters, Managua, where they are held for a few days and are indoctrinated in Guardia work. They are then assigned to companies where they receive practical training under experienced officers. At the present time there is

---

[7]For example, the officer (U.S.) breakdown on July 1, 1929, was as follows: 37 USMC officers, 8 USN officers, 133 USMC noncommissioned officers and 20 USN petty officers. A year later on June 30, the composition was much the same: 54 USMC officers, 9 USN officers, 117 USMC and 20 USN noncommissioned officers (Ibid.). This arrangement was maintained throughout the intervention. The figures for June 30, 1932, were: 59 Marine and 6 Navy officers, 122 USMC noncommissioned officers and 14 Navy petty officers ("Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy," November 15, 1932, printed in Annual Reports [1932], p. 31.).

> no school for the special training of officers. A school for training and indoctrinating officers is highly desirable, but due to the shortage of officers in the field, it has been impossible to spare the time for this training.[8]

It would seem unlikely with the increased "bandit" activity of 1930-32 that the Guard corrected this training deficiency.

This lack of specialized training had its effects. Although headquarters judged the overall performance of its American officer personnel (commissioned and noncommissioned) to be excellent, many of the noncommissioned officers serving as lieutenants had to be replaced.[9] More serious were the mutinies. It is difficult to estimate to what extent a formal indoctrination program for the American Guardia officer in the social, cultural, and value system of the native Nicaraguan might have prevented at least some of the eight mutinies that occurred in the Guard during its Marine tutelage (a ninth incident involved the apparently accidental killing of a commissioned Marine officer of the Guard by a native sentry and a tenth, the justifiable shooting of a Marine sergeant who was an officer in the Guard). Five of the eight mutinies

---

[8]Memorandum, unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. The Guard, early in its organization, adopted the procedure of first appointing enlisted Marines and Navy men as cadets for a probationary period prior to commissioning them as officers in the Guardia Nacional. How long this procedure was in effect remains to be determined ("Report of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corps," October 3, 1928, printed in Annual Reports [1928], p. 1242.).

[9]Memorandum, unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

were directed against North American Guardia officers, two against Nicaraguan commissioned and noncommissioned officers, and one against all senior personnel (U.S. and Nicaraguan) of the garrison. In four of the eight cases, a perceived insult to the sensitivities of the Nicaraguan (ranging from exclusion from a dance to pending transfers and reductions in rank) was either the only cause or at least a contributory factor in generating the revolts. An awareness, provided by a formal training program, of the socio-cultural facets of Nicaraguan life may have averted affronts to Nicaraguan pride and adapted standard American disciplinary measures (such as reduction in rank) to the Nicaraguan life-style. This education might have reduced the number of mutinies by 50 percent. In only three of the mutinies was there collusion with the Sandinistas. As a result of these eight revolts, five Marine Corps personnel (including one officer) were killed and two faithful guardsmen wounded.[10] Despite these eight occurrences, "the enlisted guardia were on the whole very loyal to their officers, both American and Nicaraguan."[11]

---

[10]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 109-122, passim. The first mutiny occurred on January 8, 1928, and the last, the only revolt in which a commissioned Nicaraguan officer participated, on June 30, 1932.

[11]Ibid., p. 39.

This fealty was engendered by a tradition of caudillismo, by mutual exposure to the rigors of combat, and perhaps most by assured pay, board, and medical care. The army that wasn't paid in Nicaragua soon ceased to exist.[12] An illiterate raso (private) in the Guardia was considerably better off than his counterpart in civilian life. The ordinary laborer's wage averaged about 50 cents a day with many mozos earning only 5 to 6 dollars per month.[13] A Guard private earned a monthly wage of 12 dollars, received a daily ration valued at 30 cents, and was provided with free medical treatment.[14] This rate of pay, the steady employment, and the benefits of food, lodging, and medical care were certainly inducements that persuaded the Nicaraguan soldier to remain loyal to his American and Nicaraguan officers. One has to eat.

The comparative advantages offered by the Guard in the way of wages and personal care undoubtedly helped recruiting. Once the Nicaraguan peasant learned that members of the Guard actually received their pay and on a regular

---

[12]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 251.

[13]Denny, Dollars for Bullets, p. 49.

[14]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 79, 84. The value of the daily ration was subsequently reduced to 25 cents in 1929 and to 20 cents in 1930 (Smith, et al., p. 79.).

basis, he sought to enlist. The following table shows that the Guard had little difficulty in meeting its enlisted manning requirements.

TABLE 12

ENLISTMENTS, 1927-1932

Period	Enlistments	Enlisted Force Level[a]	Authorized Enlisted Strength[a]
Oct.1,1927-Sept.30,1928	1405	1633	2000[b]
Oct.1,1928-Sept.30,1929	1056	1939	2000
Oct.1,1929-Sept.30,1930	1094	2241	2000
Oct.1,1930-Sept.30,1931	1285[c]	2210	2150
Oct.1,1931-Sept.30,1932	799[c]	2274	2150

Notes: a. The "Enlisted Force Level" and "Authorized Enlisted Strength" were as of the later date for each row.

b. The authorized enlisted strength of 2000 for September 30, 1928, had only been established in June, 1928. Prior to June, the authorized enlisted strength was 1136.

c. The enlistments for the reporting period 1930-31 and 1931-32 include 424 and 434 re-enlistments, respectively. These re-enlistments would be men who originally enlisted in 1927-28 and 1928-29 for the mandatory three years.

d. The enlisted force levels include those enlisted Guardia hired by private firms to protect their property. These men were paid by the companies that hired them. They were not carried on Guardia payrolls and hence could be in excess of the authorized strength. For example, in 1932, the Standard Fruit Company supported 50 men (officers and enlisted); the Pacific Railroad Company, 20; and the San Antonio Sugar Estates, 20 (Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 18-19, 220.).

Sources: "Annual Reports of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," 1928-1932, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC

(pertinent sections of the Annual Report for 1929 are located in Box 10, File Folder 14, and Box 11, File Folder 13); for authorized strengths, see supra, n. 6, p. 83.

Originally, the Guard transferred the new recruit from his place of enlistment, when it coincided with his home, to another military department in order to assist the individual in maintaining a non-partisan attitude.[15] Headquarters changed this policy sometime during 1929 due to the costly and inadequate transportation facilities between departments and as an attempt to decrease the desertion rate by having men serve in their home departments.[16] The number of desertions, as TABLE 13 illustrates, did decrease during 1930 but remained high throughout the intervention except for the last year.

TABLE 13

DESERTIONS, 1927-1932

Period	Desertions	Re-joined from Desertion	Discharged
Oct.1,1927-Sept.30,1928	159	23	49
Oct.1,1928-Sept.30,1929	480	201	387
Oct.1,1929-Sept.30,1930	323	147	402
Oct.1,1930-Sept.30,1931	270	64	971[a]
Oct.1.1931-Sept.30,1932	116	60	580[a]
Total	1348	495	2389

[15]General Order No. 73, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, October 31, 1927, Box 10, File Folder 17, FRC.

[16]Memorandum, unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. General Order No. 73 of 1927 was not rescinded until February 27, 1930 (General Order No. 15, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 27 February 1930, Box 10, File Folder 18, FRC.). However, as the above indicates, in practice, General Order No. 73-1927 was violated prior to its cancellation.

Notes: a. The higher discharge rates of 1930-31 and 1931-32 were due to expiration of the three-year enlistments begun in 1927-28 and 1928-29.

b. In addition, five enlisted Marines (officers in the Guard) deserted while serving with the Guardia (File "N," HQ, USMC.).

Sources: "Annual Reports of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," 1928-1932, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC (for the 1929 Annual Report, pertinent facts are located in Box 11, File Folder 13).

The high number of discharges and desertions were due to a number of factors--disenchantment with the service, inadequate recruit screening, unfitness, and the lack of any tradition of a disciplined armed force and allegiance to that force. The Guard did manage to recover 37 percent of all those who did desert. Many of these men probably "deserted" when they felt the urge or necessity and returned of their own free will never having been aware of having committed a "crime" or believing that they had committed one. The inculcation of discipline and fealty took time, but as the low number of desertions in 1932 indicates, persistent training in these areas was finally successful.

The overall enlisted training program of the Guardia Nacional is adequately described by the abbreviation OJT--on-the-job training. There was little formal training in the basics of soldiery. If the recruit lived long enough, and the casualty figures for the Guard indicate he did, he became a competent soldier by practice. Upon his enlistment,

the recruit went through one month of basic training and then, evidently, he was sent straight to the field.[17] Small arms training, during particularly hectic times, was only a week long.[18] In April, 1929, Headquarters issued a General Order that made general military training the responsibility of the local commands. The General Order prescribed the training to be conducted which included instruction in reading, writing, and simple arithmetic for the illiterate members of the Guardia.[19] Headquarters, at various other times, directed that monetary awards and punishments be utilized to enhance the training procedures. It authorized the payment of 25 cents to the guardsman having the cleanest clothing, rifle, and equipment at the weekly Saturday inspections held at all posts commanded by an officer and 25 cents to the man displaying the greatest proficiency in the manual of arms during the inspection. Conversely, a fine of 50 cents was imposed on a guardsman found to have a dirty rifle (this

---

[17]"Annual Report of the GN-3 Section," 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

[18]"Activities and Achievements of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua from the time of its reorganization to February 28, 1929," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

[19]"Annual Report of the GN-3 Section," 3 December 1929; Memorandum, unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 3 December 1929; and "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1931, and Ending September 30, 1932," all located in Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

practice was rescinded by General Order 15 of February 27, 1930).[20] The policy of local training, heavily interlaced with practice in the field, was continued throughout the intervention as is evident from the following statement in the 1932 Annual Report:

> During the period covered by this report (October 1, 1931, to September 30, 1932), military training has been continuous at all posts. Due to the increase in bandit activity and the accompanying need of all available men for field duty, the majority of recruits received their training in actual service in the field. However, whenever opportunity availed itself, schools were held at all posts for the enlisted personnel in which the duties of the soldier were taught, particular stress being laid on the use, care, and functioning of the rifle and automatic weapons.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> No regular training centers for the enlisted personnel were operated during the year due to the paramount need of all available men for field duty.[21]

This lack of formal training, if "bandit" casualties are to be believed, apparently did not impair the performance of the Guard in combat. The enlisted guardia learned how to fight by fighting.

Training for noncommissioned officers was no more formal than it was for recruits. Again, headquarters divorced itself from training operations and gave the responsibility of preparing enlisted men for advancement to the rank of corporal and above to the field commands--the organizations

---

[20]General Order No. 95, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, December 2, 1927; and General Order No. 30, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, May 12, 1930, located in Box 10, File Folder 17 and Box 10, File Folder 18, FRC, respectively.

[21]"Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1931, and Ending September 30, 1932," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

with the least amount of time to conduct an orderly training program. General Order No. 13-1930 directed the local units to train their own noncommissioned officers:

> School will habitually be held in each organization for the proper training of Guardia recommended for promotion. The course shall be such as to fit the man to qualify for the next higher rank.[22]

One exception to this policy of local training of noncommissioned officers occurred in 1930. Five Nicaraguan first sergeants attended a course in company administration at the Military Academy in Managua for one month during the summer of 1930. Four satisfactorily completed the course.[23] Other than this one instance, this writer is not familiar with any other attempts to provide noncommissioned officers with formalized training.

The lack of time, resources, facilities, or whatever the reason for the Marines' failure to provide adequate formal training for enlisted of all ranks was corrected by the expedient of combat. A greater shortcoming, because it was not rectified, was the combined inability and failure of the Guard leadership to commission a sufficient number of native officers at all levels early enough in the intervention to enable a smooth and successful transition of the Guard to Nicaraguan control when the Marines withdrew in 1933.

---

[22]General Order No. 13, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, February 28, 1930, Box 10, File Folder 18, FRC.

[23]"Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1929, and Ending September 30, 1930," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

Of the 178 Nicaraguan line officers with the rank of captain and below (in other words, those officers most likely to conduct patrols) not holding staff positions (i.e., personnel officer, instructor at the Military Academy, etc.) on the day of the turnover, only 87 had been officers for longer than a month and one half. Furthermore, of those same 178 officers, only 28 had led patrols which had made contact with the "bandits." All native line officers above the rank of captain (of which there were 17) were appointed from civilian life by President Moncada in November and December of 1932. Twenty-two of the thirty-three captains were likewise appointed from civilian life.[24] These 39 officers, of course, had no prior experience in the Guard (some had gained experience in Nicaragua's various revolutions).

This lack of experienced junior officers and trained senior officers was in marked contrast to Colonel Rhea's intention of providing the nascent Guardia with native leaders as soon as practicable (See supra, p. 49). It is not entirely clear why Rhea's successors did not meet this goal. For senior officers, the difficulty seems to have been due to political restrictions. In the case of junior officers,

---

[24]Data collected from the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim; and Letter from the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, 15 December 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC. The figure given (28) for the number of officers having led patrols in contact with the "bandits" maybe low by, say, 10 due to the difficulty of identifying officers with the same last name and due to the fact that not all patrol leaders are named.

the problem was mostly one of money. Although the budget established in the December 22, 1927, agreement provided for an annual salary of 600 dollars each for 20 officer students, there was no provision in the budget specifically funding officer training.[25] Evidently, monies for this purpose were not available until 1930. The jefe director recommended to President Moncada in 1929 the establishment of a military school for the training of Nicaraguan officers.[26] Moncada approved the proposal but stated that the financing of the institution would have to wait till the first half of 1930.[27] On April 1, 1930, the Military Academy was open for instruction with a staff of two Marine officers and one gunnery-sergeant, USMC.[28] The first class, composed of nine Nicaraguan senior noncommissioned officers, graduated on June 22, 1930--nine months ahead of schedule due to increased "bandit" activities in the Northern and Central Areas (See supra, pp. 91-93).[29] This brought the total number of native

---

[25]"Agreement between the United States and the Republic of Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 209.

[26]"Annual Report of the GN-3 Section," 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

[27]Memorandum, unsigned, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, 3 December 1929, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

[28]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, p. 102.

[29]Ibid., p. 103; and "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1929, and Ending September 30, 1930," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

officers serving in the Guard to seventeen. The first Nicaraguan officer had been appointed from civilian life on July 30, 1929. He was followed by seven others appointed from civilian life on November 21, 1929.[30] Three more classes attended the Military Academy prior to the U.S. withdrawal producing a total of 166 new officers for the four classes.[31]

The length of the academic year at the Academy fluctuated considerably, the amount of variation being dependent on the exigency for officers in the field. Originally, the course of instruction was to be for eleven months--nine months class work and two months field work.[32] By the time the second class of cadets entered the Academy on November 19, 1930, the allotted time had been reduced to nine months--

---

[30]Letter from Commanding Officer (D.C. McDougal) to the Major General Commandant, August 20, 1930, Box 12, File Folder 28, FRC. Two of the seven officers appointed in November, 1929, were subsequently discharged for unsatisfactory performance on July 1, 1930 (Ibid.).

[31]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 104-06. The graduation dates were June 1, 1931; April 7, 1932; and December 1, 1932. Three of the twenty-eight graduates of the second class were officers attending the Military Academy and hence are not included in 166 total above ("Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1930, and Ending September 30, 1931," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.).

[32]"Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1929, and Ending September 30, 1930," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC.

eight in the classroom followed by one in the field.[33] However, only one class, the third, ever got the benefit of a full nine months of instruction. Of the others, the first had two and one half; the second, six and one half; and the fourth, seven months.[34]

The curriculum at the Military Academy varied in detail from class to class as the staff translated more Marine Corps training manuals into Spanish, and as they made adjustments in the course of study to make it more applicable to the Nicaraguan situation. However, all classes, with possible exception of the first due to its brevity, received basically the same training. There were six areas of study: Military Science (drill, patrolling, leadership, etc.), Administration (pay, company administration, duties of department, district, and sub-district commanders, etc.), Infantry Weapons (use, care, and operation of small arms), Law (Constitution of Nicaragua, Articles for the Government of the Guardia Nacional, police regulations, etc.), Engineering (roads, fortifications, map making and reading, etc.), and Academic Subjects (Math, English, and the History, Customs, Traditions, and Geography of Nicaragua, etc.). The greatest

---

[34]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 103-06.

number of hours of instruction were devoted to Military Science.[35]

In addition to the scheduled instruction, two of the classes (the second and third) participated in combat patrols against the Sandinistas. The members of the Corps of Cadets and the staff of the Academy constituted a reserve force for the Guardia and were subject to active duty operations any time after the third week of training. The second class was in the field for one month and had one contact with the "bandits." The third class conducted patrols for two months and made four contacts.[36]

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the Marines did train Nicaraguan junior officers, but they trained many of them too late thus preventing native officers from acquiring needed combat experience. A total of 166 officers were commissioned from the Academy. Of these 166 officers, 132 graduated in 1932; and of these, 73 were commissioned on December 1, 1932, only one month prior to the

---

[35]"Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1930, and Ending September 30, 1931;" and "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1931, and Ending September 30, 1932,"both in Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC. The scheduled hours of instruction for the second class were as follows: Military Science--291, Engineering--199, Law--189, Infantry Weapons--184, Academic Subjects--112, and Administration--84 (See 1931 Annual Report).

[36]Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 103,105.

U.S. withdrawal.[37] This delay in training was probably due to both insufficient funds and an error in judgement in not expediting officer training once the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Nicaragua became definite in early 1931. With 80 percent of all Academy officers graduating in 1932, and by far the bulk of the junior line officers came from this source (very few were commissioned from the ranks or appointed from civilian life), it is not surprising that Marine led patrols had the majority of the contacts with the Sandinistas. Nicaraguan commanded patrols, as is indicated by the following table, never constituted more than one-third of the patrols having contact with "bandits" in any one given year.

TABLE 14

GN PATROL CONTACTS, 1927-1932

Year	Number of Nic. Line Officers Beginning-End[a]		Nicaraguan Led Contacts[c]	Marine Led Contacts	Unkn	Total
1927[b]	0	0	0	18	2	20
1928	0	0	1	25	2	28
1929	0	8	5	20	0	25
1930	8	15	19	101	0	120
1931	15	35	23	118	0	141
1932	35	208	59	114	3	176
Total	———		107	396	7	510

Nic. = Nicaraguan, Unkn = Patrol leader unknown

---

[37] Ibid., pp. 103-06. The number of graduates per class was as follows: 1st class--9, 2nd class--25 (does not include the 3 officers that also graduated with this class), 3rd class--59, and 4th class--73.

Notes: a. "Beginning" refers to the number of Nicaraguan line officers as of January 1 of each year and "End" to the number as of December 31. All native officers in the Guard were line officers except those in the Medical Corps.

b. The year 1927 begins with the first contact in July at Ocotal on the 16th.

c. "Nicaraguan Led Contacts" include those patrols commanded by native enlisted and officer personnel that had contact with the Sandinistas.

d. The contacts listed are only those contacts in which members of the Guardia Nacional participated. That is, the patrols were mixed composition (USMC-GN) or Marine/Nicaraguan led patrols composed of nationals only.

Sources: "The Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim; "Annual Reports of the Guardia Nacional," 1928-1932, Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; "Roster of Officers Performing Duty in the Guardia Nacional," Box 9, File Folder 14, FRC; Letter from Commanding Officer (D.C. McDougal) to Major General Commandant, Managua, August 20, 1930, Box 12, File Folder 28, FRC; Letter from Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, December 15, 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC; and The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (Matthews) to the American Chargé (Beaulac), April 4, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 857.

While the junior officers lacked combat experience, the senior officers appointed from civilian life in late 1932 had neither training nor experience as Guard officers. The Marines were unable during their tutelage of the Guardia Nacional to provide the Guard with a corps of trained and

experienced field grade (major and above) officers.[38] The deficiency of competent native officers in the junior grades is explicable in terms of misjudgement and lack of funds. As for the senior officers, it was a matter of political constraints that were not overcome until a few months before the withdrawal.

---

[38] The problem of procuring higher grade officers is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE TURNOVER

The first definitive statement on the United States withdrawal from Nicaragua appeared in a letter from Secretary of State Stimson to President Moncada in November, 1930. Stimson wrote:

> At this point, I feel bound to remind you that the time is rapidly approaching when it will be necessary for the United States Government to withdraw its Marine forces and officers from Nicaragua. The presence of those forces have always necessarily created an abnormal situation and one which can not be permanent. . . . I can not see how they can remain later than to assist you in carrying out the elections of November, 1932. This country will then have helped Nicaragua for five years to police its territory and to keep banditry in check. Public opinion in this country will hardly support a further continuance of that situation.[1]

Public opinion, however, was only one of the factors urging the United States to withdraw its armed forces from Nicaragua. There was also the persistent opposition of Congress (culminating in the Senate's refusal to appropriate funds for the supervision of the 1932 Nicaraguan elections), the antagonism of many of the Latin American countries, the

---

[1]The Secretary of State to the President of Nicaragua (Moncada), November 24, 1930, Foreign Relations, 1930, III, p. 686.

considerable expense of maintaining an overseas force during a depression, and perhaps the possible ill effects of a continued intervention on the Republican chances in the approaching presidential election of 1932.[2]

Two months after the letter to Moncada, Stimson notified the Secretary of the Navy of the State Department's desire for withdrawal after the 1932 Nicaraguan elections:

> I feel that we should be in a position, after the Presidential elections in Nicaragua in 1932, to withdraw all our Marines from the country should this Government at that time decide that that is the wise thing to do. . . ., I want to ask you to issue instructions to the Commander of the Guardia Nacional to devote special attention to the training up of Nicaraguan officers so that we may be in a position, should that then be the decision of this Government, to turn over the whole Guardia force to Nicaragua upon the installation of the new Government on January 1, 1933.[3]

To ascertain the opinion on the proposed withdrawal of those most closely associated with the Nicaraguan situation, Stimson requested the American Minister, Hanna, and General McDougal to come to Washington to discuss the withdrawal with him. General McCoy, the former Chairman of the 1928 Electoral Commission, was also invited. The discussions with the Secretary of State began at the end of January, 1931.[4] By

---

[2]Kamman, Search for Stability, pp. 169, 193; and Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 264-71.

[3]The Secretary of State to the Secretary of the Navy (Adams), January 22, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, pp. 839-40.

[4]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 197.

February 5th, the group had developed a policy to govern U.S. military action for the remainder of the intervention. A Marine force would be retained till the withdrawal, but it would only be stationed in Managua. Marines deployed to the Northern and Central Areas were to be concentrated in Managua by June 1, 1931, and were to be replaced by the 500 new guardsmen recruited for this purpose (See supra, n. 6, p.83).[5] On February 13, Secretary Stimson made public his intention to withdraw all Marines, including those with the Guard, from Nicaragua after the 1932 election. Also, he described the policy adopted on February 5 and stated that the Marine forces (inclusive of the Marines in the Guard) would be reduced to approximately 500 men by the June 1st deadline.[6] By these public statements, the U.S. committed

---

[5]Memorandum by the Secretary of State, February 5, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, pp. 841-44.

[6]Press statement contained in Stimson to Hanna, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, pp. 844-45. The total U.S. force level in Nicaragua never did decline to the 500 mark. On June 6, 1931, 2nd Brigade strength was 803. This included about 50 Navy personnel attached to the Brigade ("Record of Events, 31 May 31--6 June 31," Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No. 19, HQ, USMC.). In addition to the 803, there was about 200 Marines and Navy men in the Guard. On December 24, 1932, the 2nd Brigade numbered 806 ("Record of Events, 18 December 32--24 December 32," Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No. 19, HQ, USMC.), and the number of U.S. personnel in the Guard was about 160.

itself to a specific withdrawal date as well as a finite period in which to replace American officers of the Guard with Nicaraguans.

During the Stimson meetings with McCoy, Hanna, and McDougal, the commandant of the Marine Corps had appraised McDougal's chief of staff (soon to be appointed Jefe Director on February 6, 1931), Lieutenant Colonel C.B. Matthews, USMC, on the necessity of expediting the training of native officers in view of the proposed withdrawal date of January 1, 1933.[7] Matthews' plan for doing this, as reported by Hanna, consisted of increasing the number of Academy graduates so as to provide for the requisite number of junior line officers, appointing doctors from civilian life to staff the Medical Corps, and

---

[7]Letter from the Major General Commandant to the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, Washington, January 31, 1931, Box 11, File Folder 11, FRC. Matthews had been in Nicaragua since July, 1930, first serving as the Central Area Commander and then assuming the chief of staff post on October 28, 1930 (Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 227, 229.). He had remained in Managua while McDougal went to talk to Stimson in Washington. The letter above, although addressed to the Commanding Officer of the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, was evidently meant for Matthews since McDougal was in Washington. The letter bears Matthews initials indicating he had seen the letter. This raises an interesting point of conjecture. To what extent did McDougal, who was soon to be relieved and who was in Washington committing the Guard to a course of actions that he did not have to implement (replacement of the Marines in the Northern and Central Areas and turnover of the Guard to native officers by 1933), and Matthews agree on the future of the Guard? One can only assume that the two officers had discussed the matter prior to McDougal's departure and were in substantial agreement.

promoting experienced Nicaraguan non-commissioned officers to fill the officer billets in the Quartermaster and other staff departments. In Hanna's report there was relayed an admission by Matthews that he had not developed any program to provide for field grade officers and apparently, he was not planning to do so.[8] This concession should have triggered an alarm at the Latin American desk in the State Department. Here was the ranking American officer in the Guard reporting to the American minister that the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment was preparing to provide the Guard with native junior officers, but it had no concept as how to proceed to acquire senior officers for that organization.

The State Department, evidently, did not awaken to this omission in the withdrawal scheme until late February, 1932.[9] On March 11, State sent an urgent inquiry to the

---

[8]Hanna to Stimson, March 12, 1931, Foreign Relations, 1931, II, p. 846. Of the 18 native officers in the Medical Corps (including 11 half-pay contract surgeons and dentists) at the time of the turnover, 12 had been appointed from civilian life in November and December, 1932 (Letter from the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, 15 December 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC.). The proposal to commission men from the ranks was apparently not implemented. To this writer's knowledge, only four men were promoted directly from the ranks (The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua [Matthews] to the American Chargé [Beaulac], April 4, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 857.). Perhaps, this was sufficient. The number of Academy graduates was increased as has been previously discussed (See, supra, p. 119).

[9]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 283-84.

Legation requesting information on the Guard commander's plans for executing the transfer of the Guardia Nacional to Nicaraguan officers.[10] The Legation replied on April 2 stating that the junior officer and Medical Corps complements would be filled by the date of the withdrawal. However, the appointment of field grade officers was to be left to the newly elected president following his assumption of office on January 1, 1933.[11] This proposal would have destroyed any hope of maintaining the Guard as a non-partisan organization. Obviously, the new president would appoint only men of his party loyal to himself to high positions in the Guard. Paradoxically, in light of subsequent events (Somoza's dictatorship), it probably would have provided Nicaragua with stability—not through democratic elections but by means of force. The party elected to office in November, 1932, assuming some sort of accomodation with Sandino, would have had the means to perpetuate itself in power and dissuade any future revolution--an organized, disciplined, militarily competent armed force, the Guardia Nacional. That was something Nicaragua never had before.

On April 5th, the American Chargé, Beaulac, sent a letter supplement to his April 2nd telegram containing a new

---

[10]Stimson to Beaulac, March 11, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 852.

[11]Beaulac to Stimson, April 2, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 853.

proposal from Matthews for obtaining senior officers. Matthews now suggested that native high ranking officers be appointed, apparently by Moncada but chosen by the winner of the presidential election, about two months before the turnover so as to enable the Nicaraguans to receive some practical training in the duties they would assume upon the departure of the American officers.[12] This was followed by another revision sent to the Legation in June. In a letter to Hanna, dated June 15th, Matthews explained his latest proposition:

> It will in all probability not be practicable to secure the appointment of suitable native officers for the higher commands during the current administration. The President who will be elected on 6 November, 1932, and inaugurated on 1 January, 1933, will have to be depended upon to make these appointments [a modification of Matthews' April 4 position but consistent with Legation's April 2nd telegram] . . . . It would be most helpful if these officers could be selected in equal numbers from the two political parties, and I recommend that our Government use its good offices with the new President to bring about this result.[13]

Matthews went on to state that following the new president's appointment of officers after his inauguration, fifty Marines should stay on with the Guard for two months to provide at least a modicum of training for the new senior officers.

---

[12]The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (Matthews) to the American Chargé (Beaulac), April 4, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 858.

[13]Letter from C.B. Matthews to the Honorable Matthew E. Hanna, Managua, June 15, 1932, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 149.

Matthews believed that these two months would be wholly inadequate to train the officers but would be sufficient time to enable the mechanics of the turnover to proceed smoothly.[14] Hanna concurred with Matthews' suggestions and forwarded them approved to the State Department on June 21.[15]

Matthews' proposal for a bipartisan Guardia is the first indication that the Guard commander was aware of the political implications for the United States attendant to the appointment of officers to the directing positions in the Guard. His previous proposals would have left the Guardia Nacional a very partisan organization, and clearly this would have been an objectionable result, after five years of intervention, to the State Department. Of Matthews' June 15 suggestions, the Department considered only his bipartisan proposition acceptable. Otherwise, the reply was negative and unrealistic. The withdrawal would proceed as planned, no Marines would remain in Nicaragua beyond the inauguration of the Nicaraguan president, and as for the matter of providing the Guard with field grade officers, that was simple; Matthews should just select those best qualified, divided equally as

---

[14] Ibid.

[15] Hanna to Stimson, June 21, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, pp. 865-66. In this dispatch Hanna quotes virtually the entire contents of Matthews' June 15th letter.

to number and rank between Liberals and Conservatives, and have President Moncada appoint them immediately.[16]

Matthews' answer, sent to the Legation on August 8, stated, as diplomatically as possible, that only someone entirely unfamiliar with the internal politics of Nicaragua could have proffered the solution to the senior officer problem as set forth in the Department's July 19 telegram:

> , . . . it is inconceivable to me that any president will accept or continue in office Nicaraguan officers, of high rank in key positions in the Guardia, of whose personal loyalty to himself and to his party there is the slightest doubt. . . .
>
> In view of these conditions, the existence of which I believe everyone familiar with the situation here will admit, it is obviously impossible to select for the higher commands of the Guardia, Nicaraguans who will be acceptable to the new president until it is known who the new president will be. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have considered and rejected as impracticable the plan of requesting the President to appoint Nicaraguans whom I believe to be qualified for the higher ranks before the candidates of the leading parties are known; both because I am certain that the present Chief Executive will refuse to make the necessary appointments because of the expense involved, and because no one would accept an appointment without assurance that it would be made permanent by the new president, an assurance which it is of course impossible to give at the present time.[17]

His plan for the turnover disapproved by the State Department and having rejected the Department's recommendation

---

[16]Stimson to Hanna, July 19, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, pp. 866-67.

[17]The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (Matthews) to the American Minister (Hanna), August 8, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, pp. 868-69. Also in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 151-52.

for acquiring senior grade officers, Matthews offered an alternative plan. As soon as the two parties selected their nominees for president, Matthews would request these two gentlement to provide him with a list of men, equally divided as to party affiliation, each candidate desired to have fill the higher offices of the Guardia. The Guard commander then would present this list to President Moncada who would appoint the men on the winning candidate's list to the high positions in the Guard immediately after the elections.[18] The Department approved this plan on August 30th.

> The Department considers that the plan now proposed is satisfactory from both the military and political standpoint. It will permit those Nicaraguan officers who are to fill the higher and most responsible positions to gain instruction and experience by working alongside the American personnel. It also will allow the incoming President, whoever he may be, to select the officers who will command the Guardia during his term. Finally it will assure the continuance of the non-partisan basis of the Guardia since its officers will be drawn equally from the two historic political parties [This is a neat bit of self-deception. Obviously, the Guard, as envisioned by Matthews, would be a bipartisan not a non-partisan organization following the U.S. withdrawal.] .[19]

Minister Hanna presented the Matthews' plan to President Moncada on September 8. Moncada approved it and suggested that in order to ensure the scheme would be implemented

---

[18]The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (Matthews) to the American Minister (Hanna), August 8, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 869. The expense of the appointments would be reduced by paying the senior officers the salary of a captain in the Guard until the turnover.

[19]Castle to Hanna, August 30, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, pp. 871-72.

by the winning candidate, both nominees should sign an agreement in the presence of a representative of the State Department pledging themselves to execute the plan.[20] The State Department agreed to this.[21] The presidential and vice-presidential candidates of both parties signed the agreement on November 5, the day before the election. In its final form, the accord provided that "the non-partisan [actually bipartisan] character of the Guardia Nacional shall be strictly maintained in the enlisted personnel, the cadets of the Military Academy, and in each grade of commissioned officers, except [empnasis added] the grade of Jefe Director."[22] In other words, the commanding officer of the Guard would be a political appointee, presumably, of the same party as the president.

Immediately following the election, Sacasa, the Liberal president-elect, submitted a revised list of selectees, with the approval of Minister Hanna and President Moncada, to Matthews. The new list provided for thirty-six appointments as compared to the original list of thirty.[23] In actuality,

---

[20]Hanna to Stimson, September 16, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 873.

[21]Stimson to Hanna, September 19, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, pp. 873-74.

[22]Copy of Agreement signed on November 5, 1932, Providing for the Maintenance of the Non-Partisan Character of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 887.

[23]Letter from C.B. Matthews to Sr. Don José María Moncada, Managua, November 17, 1932, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 100. In this letter Matthews states that the position of chief of staff, in accordance with the November 5 agreement, was to be filled by a member of the winning political party. Apparently then, even though the November 5th accord does not so state, both the jefe director and the chief of staff were political appointees of the victorious party.

President Moncada appointed thirty-nine officers from civilian life to high positions in the Guard, the last being appointed on December 12.[24] Excluding the jefe director, the rank and party distribution were as follows:

TABLE 15

NICARAGUAN SENIOR LINE OFFICERS

Rank	Conservative	Liberal	Total
Colonel	3	3	6
Major	5	5	10
Captain	11	11	22
Total	19	19	38

Source: Letter from C.B. Matthews to the Honorable Matthew E. Hanna, Managua, undated, Box 11, File Folder 11, FRC. Also contained in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 161.

---

[24]Letter from Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, 15 December 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC. The thirty-nine appointees do not include the officers appointed from civilian life to the Medical Corps (See supra, n. 8, p. 127), nor the one 2nd lieutenant (permanent) appointed on December 8 (See Matthews' letter of December 15, 1932, above). The announcement that civilians would be appointed their seniors was not received favorably by the Nicaraguan officers already serving in the Guard. To quiet, or at least ease, this discontent, General Matthews issued a special order on October 21, 1932, stating that it was his intent, upon graduation of the present class of the Military Academy, to promote those qualified by examination to the next higher rank (The highest rank held at that time by a native officer was 1st Lt.; therefore 1st. Lts. would be promoted to captain, etc.)except for 2nd lieutenants (temporary) who would be appointed permanent 2nd lieutenants (Special Order No. 38-1932, Headquarters, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, October 21, 1932, printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 159.).

Sacasa selected, perhaps under pressure from Moncada, Hanna, and Matthews, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Liberal, Anastasio Somoza, as jefe director.[25] President Moncada subsequently appointed Somoza a Brigadier General in the Guard, and Somoza assumed the interim position of Assistant Jefe Director on November 14, 1932, prior to accepting the office of director in January.[26] The apprenticeship of the other senior officers was not as long as General Somoza's. However, the Marines did provide these officers with a two week course in administration and in the basics of command and combat following their appointments from civilian life in November and December, 1932.[27]

The Americans turned over command of the Northern and Central Areas and the Department of Chontales on December 15.[28] In the remaining Areas, the Marines of the Guard concentrated in the principal towns--on the West Coast, along the rail line in order to protect the route of evacuation to the embarkation port of Corinto, and on the East Coast at Puerto Cabezas and

---

[25]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 295-97.

[26]Letter from the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, 15 December 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC.

[27]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 298.

[28]Hanna to Stimson, December 16, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V. p. 908.

Bluefields.[29] On January 1, 1933, following the inauguration of President Sacasa, General Matthews relinquished command of the Guardia Nacional to General Somoza.[30] The next day, the last of the Marines and Navy personnel boarded the troop ships at Corinto and sailed from Nicaragua. The State Department released the following statement:

> Today the United States marines leave Nicaragua. No American armed forces will remain in that country, either as instructors in the constabulary, as a Legation Guard, or in any other capacity whatsoever. . . .
> . . . . . .
> The withdrawal of the American forces,. . . marks the termination of the special relationship which has existed between the United States and Nicaragua.[31]

The six year intervention was over. The Guard and Nicaragua were left to stand or fall on their own. As Assistant Secretary of State Francis White had predicted a few months earlier, the United States got out "bag and baggage."[32]

---

[29]Memorandum from Commanding General, Second Brigade USMC, to General Matthews, Managua, 29 October 1932; and Directive from the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to All Area and Department Commanders, Managua, 3 December 1932, both located in Box 12, File Folder 26, FRC.

[30]Hanna to Stimson, January 2, 1933, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 924.

[31]Press Release Issued by the Department of State, January 2, 1933, Foreign Relations, 1933, V, pp. 848-49.

[32]Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State (White) August 26, 1932, Foreign Relations, 1932, V, p. 871.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Peace spared or denied, depending on one's point of view, the native led Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua from a final confrontation with the Sandinistas. On February 2, 1933, as a result of negotiations begun in late December, 1932, Sandino signed, in Managua, a peace treaty with the Nicaraguan government of President Sacasa.[1] Sandinistas began turning themselves and their arms in at San Rafael del Norte, Department of Jinotega, on February 22.[2] Upon completion of the disarmament in early March, approximately 1800 to 3000 men claiming allegiance to Sandino had surrendered along with at least part of their arms and ammunition.[3]

Whether or not the Guard, under native officers, could have been successful in permanently disrupting the Sandinista movement is open to speculation. The Guardia was

---

[1]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 308-09, 312-16. The text of the peace agreement is printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 285-87.

[2]Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 247.

[3]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 318-19.

rift by dissension (Academy graduates versus the political appointees), without air support, and was low on ammunition and arms. On the other hand, the Guard officers apparently were willing to engage Sandino and had been busy increasing the force level of the Guard until it numbered about 4000 men, including auxiliaries, by early February, 1933.[4] This size of a force, properly led and armed, may have been sufficient to reduce Sandino to a nuisance. It is improbable that it could have eliminated him altogether.

The lack of a "crucible test of major combat," as one author has commented, makes it difficult to form an evaluation of the Marine Corps effort to develop a militarily competent National Guard.[5] The basic premise of the training effort was correct. Execution was faulty for a variety of reasons, some of which were beyond the control of the Corps. The concept of placing professional officers and noncommissioned officers in command of an indigenous force lacking any prior formal training and traditions is the quickest and most efficient method to develop such a force into a competent organization.

---

[4] Ibid., pp. 300, 310-14, 317, 320, 323.

[5] Megee, "United States Military Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-1932," p. 207.

There are only two ways that the military of one state can train the military of another--either the "instructors" are in a command position or they are not. One commands, or he does not command. There is no intervening position. In other words, the training of an indigenous force by a foreign military can either be by advice or by command. Both can work equally well. The former takes longer and is politically more palatable to the host state; the latter is quicker but harder for the host to swallow. The advisor has no authority (and fortunately, from the advisor's point of view, no responsibility). He can not issue a direct order to those he is supervising. He can cajole, he can plead, he can urge, he can beg. He can quit or threaten to cut off supplies and support, but he can not direct. Some tangential authority may accrue to him if he has control over the allocation of money and material, but this method of exercising authority is not responsive to immediate decisions necessitated by crises. It is too slow, for the desired results often occur after the fact; and there is no guarantee that such action on the part of the advisor will prevent repetition of mistakes in the future. An advisory effort is clearly more suitable to peacetime instruction than it is to training in a combat environment. In wartime, there is no adequate substitute for an order. Unfortunately, from the perspective of the military conducting the training, advice may have to supplant commands even in war.

A nation that gives command of its armed forces to the military of another state is forgoing its sovereignty. To be sovereign is to have the supreme lawgiving and law-enforcing authority within a certain territory.[6] Without a doubt, the surrender of the control of one's army, an executive agency, is concomitantly the surrender of one's sovereignty. In Nicaragua, the Díaz government was willing to relinquish its sovereignty to the United States because it was in danger of losing that sovereignty to the Liberals. In return for U.S. support (until the 1928 elections), the Conservative government acceded to the American demands for making peace with the Liberals. Stimson virtually dictated the terms of the peace proposal to the Nicaraguan government. One of those terms was the creation of an apolitical national constabulary under the command of American officers--an organization that would be only nominally responsible to the Nicaraguan president. Only a government experiencing a situation of extreme emergency will be willing to relinquish the command of its armed forces to a foreign power. When the possible gains from such an action exceed the possible costs of not so acting, one can expect a government to request or at least accept a foreign military mission with the authority to command.

---

[6]Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace (4th ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p. 305.

The situation in Nicaragua in the 1920's was ideal for a military mission of this type. An American commanded National Guard was acceptable to the Díaz regime, and Nicaragua had no standing army nor national police organization with their own history and traditions. In addition, the forces that did exist were devoid of any prior military training (with the possible exception of Carter's National Guard). These conditions made possible the establishment of a military organization under the control of American officers. The government accepted the Marine tutelage, and the Marines did not have to overcome an indigenous, professional military with its own doctrine and organization. The Americans created the first national military and police in Nicaragua--the Guardia Nacional. There were no predecessors.

It is unlikely that the favorable conditions the Marines found in Nicaragua in the 1920's will be duplicated anywhere in the world today. Generally, the most underdeveloped of states has at least a small standing army or a national police organization. These armed forces or police are likely to have been the recipient of British, French, American, or Russian training sometime in the past. They will have set attitudes, concepts, and self-interests. The officers and men would likely be hostile and resistant to assuming a subordinate status to foreign troops. While these factors would not preclude the establishment of a foreign tutelage over the native force, if invited or accepted by the host country,

it certainly would make the execution of training more difficult than if they did not exist. However, in this era of ardent nationalism, the states that might need such a training mission are much more likely, when faced with a military crisis, to request assistance from a friendly power in the form of combat personnel and advisors. The host country would probably desire the foreign troops to assume the bulk of combat operations while it regroups and retrains its own forces with the help of the foreign advisors.

This formula for assistance might also be more politically suitable to the donor state than one involving direct command over indigenous forces. By posing as an ally and benefactor, the foreign power could perhaps evade the acrimonious accusations that would likely result from a policy that was suggestive of occupation and "imperialism." Whether the assisting state, with the consent of the recipient government, elects to train the native forces by command or advice, it seems certain that if the military situation in the host country has deteriorated to the extent that foreign combat troops are needed to redress the predicament; both states involved will want to use these troops in active operations to relieve the pressure on the native military in order that it may be trained, equipped, and organized as soon as possible. This is assuming, of course, that both states are interested in terminating this combat assistance quickly. Such a termination can be brought about by defeating the enemy or by

replacing the foreign troops with native forces, which is the purpose of a training program. In Nicaragua, the Marine Second Brigade performed the majority of the offensive activities during the first two years of the campaign against Sandino while Marine tutors groomed the Guard.

If the training mission is to be of the nature of an advisory effort, then the foreign state must be willing to expend the additional time, men, money, and material that this method will require as compared to that of command. The results of the two methods are the same--military competence. The advisory technique takes longer; and because it does so, the assisting military can expect to carry the burden of combat operations for a greater period of time than would be required if it had command. Hence, more casualties and an increased expenditure of money and material. The advisory method requires more time because there will be an inherent tendency on the part of the force being trained to learn by mistake rather than by advice. Even if the individual advisor can establish the best of relationships with his counterpart, the native officer or enlisted man may be reluctant to try a new approach, or concept, or way of doing something due, perhaps, to pride; or because the suggested action violates the norm or contradicts previous training. If the advisor is fortunate, his counterpart will insist upon performing the task "his own way" only once. If not, it may take several repetitions of the same mistake before the native soldier is convinced that the advisor was right all along. Unfortunately,

this all takes time, and it may cost lives. In peace, time is not such a precious commodity. In war, it is. Lives always are. The advisor is not always going to be correct. When his advice is refused, there maybe a very good reason why it was not accepted. Experience may have taught the native something that the foreign professional does not know. However, the tendency should not be one of the advisor "going native," but rather one of persistently urging the indigenous military to adopt the standards, concepts, practices, and procedures, suitably adapted to the local situation, of the advisor's own military. Unfortunately, one can not ensure the implementation of advice; one can only offer it and hope.

The advisory method of training indigenous forces does not produce a more proficient military than does the command technique. In the former, the learning process takes place through the realization that the foreign professional is proffering good advice. This realization is the result of acting on the advice and discovering that it is a satisfactory way of performing the task, or by trying other methods, finding that they fail, and finally accepting the advisor's suggestion. There are possible flaws in this process. One is that while the native military is trying out its own ideas, it may find one that works. It may be wasteful of men, equipment, or time and may be less effective than the advisor's plan, but it works. At this point, "satisficing" may occur.

Satisficing is accepting the first alternative that achieves the desired results.[7] In other words, the native military having found a workable method may reject any further advice on the matter. The other possible failing in the advisory technique is that the advisor's counterpart may just ignore his advice altogether. In which case, training ceases.

A foreign military mission with the authority to command overcomes many of the problems involved in training by advising. However, it also creates problems of its own. There is bound to be some degree of hostility and resentment on the part of the indigenous forces. The intensity of which increases in proportion to the length of time the native military has existed, the extent of success it has enjoyed in past operations, and the amount of training it has had. The greater the animosity and indignation, the greater is the possibility of resistance to change which would in turn adversely affect the training effort. The advantage of command, however, does enable the foreign military to conduct training by demonstrating the proper method or procedure, having the trainees try it, and then having them repeat and refine the execution until performance is satisfactory. This enforced

---

[7]Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (2nd ed.; New York: Free Press, 1957), quoted in William D. Coplin, Introduction to International Politics: A Theoretical Overview (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 43-44.

inculcation, while having the benefit of requiring less time than the trial-and-error attempts that are prone to occur in an advisory situation, is only effective to the extent that the native officers and men are convinced of the validity of the instruction. Conviction often comes by the simple expedient of doing and then observing that what was taught actually works. However, even if thenative military recognizes that a particular technique is a correct one, if such a procedure is too alien, for whatever reason, it will not survive beyond the termination of the foreign tutelage. The native forces will modify it or abandon it.

Permanency of training, and hence competence, is the goal of any military training mission whether it is accomplished by exerting authority or by persuasion. In an advisory effort, the indigenous military achieves competency by benefiting from the greater expertise of the advisor and by learning from its own mistakes. In the case of foreign officers actually exercising command, these officers implant standard operating procedures in the native force. Once learned and accepted, these procedures tend to become permanent and enable the native military to develop into a competent organization.

In Nicaragua, the Marines did have command of the Guard, and they did provide Nicaragua with a more proficient military than it had ever had before. Unfortunately, insofar as an evaluation is concerned, Sandino never tested the Guard's

competency under native leadership. However, the Guardia, in General Somoza's hands, was a strong enough organization to successfully assasinate Sandino in February, 1934, without suffering any major repercussions, and then force the resignation of President Sacasa in June, 1936, replacing him with a Somoza supporter. General Somoza, in firm control of the country due to the Guard, was elected president in December, 1936.[8] The Guard thus evolved into an entirely different organization than the one the State Department intended it to be--trained, for the most part, it was; but it was certainly not non-partisan nor even bipartisan.

The State Department, through its agent, the Marine Corps, could have not but failed in its attempt to transform a traditionally political organization in Nicaragua--the armed forces--into a non-partisan body. The end of the non-partisan Guard came with the State Department's acceptance of Matthews' recommendation that the Nicaraguan government appoint its senior Guard officers equally from each of the two principal parties (See supra, p. 130). From this point on, non-partisanship was a dead issue. The State Department continued to refer

---

[8]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 340-57, 372-99, passim. Since General Somoza's ascendency to the presidency in 1936, the Somoza family has ruled Nicaragua. President Anastasio Somoza was assasinated in September, 1956. He was succeeded by his son Luis. At the present time, another son, General Anastasio Somoza, is the leading member of the three-man ruling junta.

to the Guardia Nacional as "non-partisan," but clearly it was supporting the creation of a bipartisan Guard. This policy was certainly more in accord with the realities of Nicaraguan politics than one pursuing the establishment of an apolitical armed force. Even more so would have been the policy proposed in Matthews' original plan to permit the new president to appoint whomever he wished to the senior grades upon his assumption of office (See supra, p.128). Assuming Sandino could have somehow been neutralized, this plan probably would have achieved half of the State Department's objective. It would have provided Nicaragua with political stability, not through democracy as the State Department desired, but by the control of a better armed, better trained, and more competent military than Nicaragua had ever had before.

It is easy in retrospect to realize that the establishment of a non-political constabulary in Nicaragua was an impossibility. However, even at the time, personnel in the Marine Corps and in the State Department warned that the pursuit of such an objective was futile. In 1926, the then American Minister, Eberhardt, wrote to Secretary of State Kellogg "that the time has not yet come, if it ever will, when a non-partisan constabulary or National Guard, organized under American ideas and ideals, will be a success in Nicaragua. It is not wanted."[9] General Feland echoed these sentiments in

---

[9]Ebernardt to Kellogg, April 8, 1926, State Department File No. 817.1051/99, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, quoted in Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 401-02.

April, 1929.[10] Two months before, President Moncada told Eberhardt the same thing--a non-partisan Guardia was an impossibility.[11] As the intervention dragged on, it became more and more apparent to those associated with it that an apolitical National Guard was not a viable objective. This realization, expressed by the American Chargé, Beaulac, in 1931 and more strongly by Laurence Duggan in the Division of Latin American Affairs at the State Department in late 1931 and again in the spring of 1932, resulted in the State Department's acceptance of a bipartisan Guard.[12]

The fact that a non-partisan constabulary was alien to Nicaraguan politics severely limited the ability of the Guard's American leadership to provide the Guardia with trained senior officers. As Matthews said, no Nicaraguan president was willing to appoint men to high position in the Guard who were not loyal to the president and to the president's party. In other words, any person being groomed for a key position in the Guard would have had to been acceptable to the president of Nicaragua and probably would have remained in office only during that particular president's term. Thus, even if the Marines in the Guard had been willing to have Nicaraguans

---

[10]Kamman, Search for Stability, p. 178.

[11]Eberhardt to Kellogg, February 14, 1929, Foreign Relations, 1929, III, p. 615.

[12]Millett, "Guardia Nacional," pp. 301-05.

appointed in a training status to senior positions in the Guardia earlier in the intervention--and the indications are they would not have been--the likelihood of their continuance in office would have been slight, and whatever expertise the native officers may have acquired would have left with them.[13]

---

[13]The Marine opposition to senior native officers was based on the premise that no Nicaraguan was qualified to command American officers and men. To gain the expertise required, the Marines suggested that Nicaraguans selected by the president as the future senior officers of the Guard "accept commissions as Second Lieutenants, or in other junior ranks, in order to gain the experience necessary to enable them to properly assume the duties and responsibilities of higher command" (Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, p. 147.). Logically, this was correct. However, this attitude shows a lamentable lack of awareness of the nature of the people and the politics of Nicaragua. The men the president would have appointed as trainees for important and powerful positions in the Guard would have been men prominent in Nicaraguan politics--ex-senators, deputies, cabinet ministers, officials of the party, and colonels and generals in the late revolutionary or government armies. The Marine Corps may have equated these positions to that of a Marine second lieutenant or less; but to a Nicaraguan general, he was a general not a mere second lieutenant! It would have been virtually impossible for prominent Nicaraguans to accept such a demeaning rank, and none did (Ibid.). It seems to this writer that the problem of Nicaraguan "face" and the Marine concern for qualified native officers could have been avoided by the expedient of providing distinguished Nicaraguans with the rank and privileges in the Guard commensurate with their social status while at the same time, at least initially, denying them any authority or responsibility. They could have been appointed as "assistants" to the American commanders and at first just observed their Marine tutors. Gradually, the Marines could have given them administrative authority and then operational authority with decisions initially subject to American approval. When the Marines found that this approval was no longer necessary, the tutelage would have been over; and the Marines could have gone home. Whether the American leadership of the Guard considered such a training program or not is not known to this writer. Anyway, the above proposition is rather academic since, as indicated in the text, native senior officers would have been unlikely to remain in their posts beyond the next presidential election.

Even if the Nicaraguan political parties and the State Department had been able to arrange the bipartisan compromise earlier in the intervention (which seems unlikely since the Department would have had to admit much sooner than apparently it was prepared to do that a non-partisan Guard was an impossibility), at the very least the two ranking officers in the Guardia, the jefe director and the chief of staff, as provided in bipartisan agreement, would have had to been replaced if the party in power changed. Had the party remained the same, it seems likely that the new president would have been sorely tempted to supplant his predecessor's appointees to these two positions with his "own" men. In other words, continuity in the native leadership of the Guardia, although possible, probably would have been difficult even under the bipartisan agreement.

During the period of the U.S. presence in Nicaragua, changes in native officer personnel, although wasteful, could have been brought about peacefully, or perhaps even avoided; but with the withdrawal of the Marines, it is doubtful that the substitutions would have been tranquil. Certainly the officers themselves would have objected as well as the outgoing administration (a continuance in office of the same party would have reduced but probably not eliminated discord). Political instability, which the State Department was trying to prevent, would have been the result of the replacement by one regime of another's senior Guardia officers.

The solution to the State Department's desire for stability and the Marine's responsibility for training senior native officers was to support the perpetuation in office of one party, or better yet in the context of Nicaraguan politics, one individual. A party or individual supported by the United States, or at least treated in a manner resembling beneficent neglect, would have been able to form a government assisted by a Marine trained, loyal, and militarily competent National Guard that could have provided Nicaragua with stability although not democracy. This, of course, during the era of "making the world safe for democracy" would have been contrary to American ideals and policy. The United States, at the time, did not support dictatorships in order to achieve political objectives. However, it seems to this writer that such a course of action would have been the only one which would have enabled the Marine Corps to effectively train Nicaraguans for senior officers positions in the Guard. It didn't happen, and the Marines didn't train the officers.

Despite the inherent difficulties in providing the Guardia with trained senior officers and despite the lack of sufficient funds early in the tutelage to support a junior officer training program, the Marines could have better prepared the National Guard for its potential confrontation with Sandino than it did. The Marines in the Guard, knowing as of February, 1931, that the U.S. withdrawal was definitely

going to occur in January, 1933, did not expedite the training of junior officers so that all of these officers could have had adequate field experience by the date of the turnover. Since the Guardia Marines were aware of the withdrawal date, it is difficult to explain why they did not adjust the training period of the fourth Academy class (May 1, 1932--December 1, 1932) so that the seventy-three graduates of this class could have had more than a few weeks of field duty under experienced Nicaraguan or Marine officers.[14] One can only assume that the Marines did not believe that an immediate clash with Sandino would occur upon withdrawal, or they considered that the formal school training was more important to the development of the young Nicaraguan officer than field experience.

Another deficiency in the implementation of the program for training the Guardia was the absence of any planned preparation of the members of the Corps for the duties they would assume upon joining the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment. Despite the Marine Corps' severe budgetary restraints and its heavy commitments and the Guard's urgent need for officers in the field, if either organization had considered that the benefits would have exceeded the cost

---

[14]Fifty-five of the seventy-three graduates were assigned to the Northern and Central Areas (Letter from the Commanding Officer, Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment, to the Major General Commandant, USMC, Managua, 15 December 1932, Box 13, File Folder 4, FRC.). The Marines turned over these two areas to native officers on December 15, 1932.

of a program of formal indoctrination in the various facets of Nicaraguan society and in the problems the individual Marine instructor was likely to encounter during his tour with the Guard, the Corps or the Guard would have found a way to provide this training. That they did not make an attempt to even provide a minimum indoctrination period of, say, a month indicates that familiarization with Nicaragua, Nicaraguans, and problems unique to training an indigenous force had a very low priority. Certainly, not all members of the National Guard Detachment needed such training, some having had experience as instructors in other native constabularies; but for those who had not had previous exposure to working with native troops, the Corps or the Guard should have made whatever sacrifice was required to at least provide some minimum training in this area. The possible gains of better working relationships with native members of the Guard, perhaps fewer mutinies and desertions, better public relations, increased popular support, and the better intelligence that might have resulted from even a small amount of indoctrination in the Nicaraguan life-style warranted some attempt in providing the Guardia Marine with familiarization with the Nicaraguan and his culture. The Marine assigned to the Guard also needed Spanish language training. However, this would have required the Marine Corps establishing an expensive school, providing the time for personnel to attend the school, and detailing, sufficiently in advance, the Marines who were to go to the Guard in order that these men could

receive language training prior to their assignment as a Guardia officer. Certainly, the Marine Corps, if had chosen to do so, could have overcome these organizational and financial problems, but it didn't. In retrospect, one can not but feel that the training of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua was an ad hoc, secondary effort. It seems apparent that in its list of considerations, Headquarters, Marine Corps, placed the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment and the Guardia Nacional near the bottom. The Marines of the Guard succeeded, for the most part, in training the Nicaraguans. However, with a greater expenditure of funds and effort on the part of the United States and the Corps, these Marines could have been better prepared for their task and, perhaps, could have trained more of the junior officers, at least, earlier in the tutelage.

The U.S. attempt to engender stability in Nicaragua through the practice of free elections failed. The very organization that the State Department intended to act as the guardian of democracy by ensuring such elections, the National Guard, became inevitably, a deciding, vice neutral, factor in Nicaraguan politics. Non-partisanship left with the Marines in 1933. The Marines trained the Guardia and endowed it with a technical competency. They did not alter the basic attitudes, values, and beliefs of its members. This is a significant lesson.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Tipitapa, May 4, 1927

General José María Moncada,
Tipitapa.

Dear General Moncada:

Confirming our conversation of this morning, I have the honor to inform you that I am authorized to say that the President of the United States intends to accept the request of the Nicaraguan Government to supervise the election of 1928; that the retention of President Díaz during the remainder of his term is regarded as essential to that plan and will be insisted upon; that a general disarmament of the country is also regarded as necessary for the proper and successful conduct of such election; and that the forces of the United States will be authorized to accept the custody of the arms of those willing to lay them down, including the government, and to disarm forcibly those who will not do so.

Very respectfully,

/s/ HENRY L. STIMSON

Source: Henry L. Stimson, American Policy in Nicaragua (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), pp. 78-79.

APPENDIX II

TABLE I

ESTIMATED SANDINISTA FORCE LEVELS

Date	Force Level	Source
Mid-May, 1927	30	Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, p. 65.
Jul. 31, 1927	200	Foreign Relations, 1927, III, p. 444.
Mar. 3, 1928	350	Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No.14, HQ, USMC
June 16, 1928	340	" " " " " " "
Sept.22, 1928	200	" " " " " " "
Dec. 1, 1928	150	" " " " " " "
Mar. 9, 1929	220	" " " " " " "
June 3, 1929	150	Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No.18, HQ, USMC
Sept.11, 1929	175	" " " " " " "
Nov. 11, 1929	150	" " " " " " "
Mar. 31, 1930	250	" " " " " " "
June 30, 1930	300	" " " " " " "
Sept.30, 1930	200	Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No.19, HQ, USMC
Nov. 30, 1930	200	Nicaragua Microfilm Reel No.14, HQ, USMC
Mar. 1, 1931	500	Box 10, File Folder 1, FRC
June 1, 1931	500	" " " " " "
Sept. 1, 1931	500	" " " " " "
Nov., 1931	?	
1932	?	

Notes: When the Sandinistas demobilized in February and March of 1933, approximately 1800 to 3000 men claiming allegiance to Sandino turned themselves in to government authorities (Millett, "Guardia Nacional," p. 318.).

APPENDIX II

TABLE 2

FIELD COMPANIES OF THE GUARDIA NACIONAL

Company	Date Began Active Operations[a]	Strength[b]		Duty Station (Co. HQ) (City, Department)
		Off.	Enl.	
1st. Co.	Jul. 1, 1927	3	50	Ocotal, Nueva Segovia
2nd. Co.	Aug. 4, 1927	No info. prov.		Chinandega, Chinandega
3rd. Co.	Aug.22, 1927	4	87	Pueblo Nuevo, Estelí
4th. Co.	Nov. 1, 1927	3	50	Nat'l Penitentiary, Managua
5th. Co.	Nov.21, 1927	6	62	León, León
6th. Co.	Apr.13, 1928	3	23	Jinotega, Jinotega
7th. Co.	Apr.17, 1928	No info. prov.		Jinotepe, Carazo
8th. Co.	May 18, 1928	4	40	Matagalpa, Matagalpa
9th. Co.	Jun. 6, 1928	4	21	Masaya, Masaya
10th. Co.	Jul.18, 1928	4	40	Estelí, Estelí
11th. Co.	Jul.27, 1928	No info. prov.		Juigalpa, Chontales
12th. Co.	Aug.20, 1928	No info. prov.		Granada, Granada
13th. Co.	Aug.21, 1928	3	10	Rivas, Rivas
16th. Co.	Mar.15, 1929	3	75	Presidential Guard, Managua

No info. prov. = No information provided, Off. = Officers, Enl. = Enlisted

Notes: a. Date is in some cases the date the company departed Managua and in others the date operations began at the assigned duty station.

b. All officers are Marines (or Navy medical personnel). The first Nicaraguan officer was not appointed until July 30, 1929. All enlisted are Nicaraguans.

c. No information was provided on the 14th and 15th Companies or even if they were established or not.

d. The 1st and 3rd Companies were combined on Dec. 31, 1927. The new combined company became the Managua (city) Police Company on Mar. 16, 1928.

Source: Julian C. Smith, et al., A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (n.p., [1937]), pp. 9-13, passim.

APPENDIX II

TABLE 3

TOTAL CASUALTIES,[a] 1927-1932

FRIENDLY CASUALTIES				
Year	USMC[b]	USMC in GN	GN[c]	Total
1927[d]	37[e]	2	13	52
1928	33[e]	2	0	35
1929	5	2	11	18
1930	14	2	37	53
1931	2	5	41	48
1932	0	6	74	80
Total	91	19	176	286

SANDINISTA CASUALTIES[f]				
Year	USMC inflicted[g]	USMC-GN inflicted[h]	GN inflicted[h]	Total
1927[d]	37	239	9	285
1928	75	96	5	176
1929	14[i]	0	47	61
1930	13	6	271	290
1931	0	0	445	445
1932	0	0	469	469
Total	139	341	1246	1726

Notes: a. Casualties include killed in action, died of wounds, and wounded in action.

b. USMC casualties do not include Marines serving with the Guardia Nacional but do include the 2nd Brigade, Marine ship detachments, and Marine aviation units.

c. GN casualties do not include Marines serving with the Guardia Nacional nor auxiliary and civilian guide casualties.

d. The year 1927 begins with the contact at Ocotal on July 16.

e. Includes the only two Marine aviators killed in action (1927) and the only Marine aviator wounded in action (1928) during the intervention.

f. Sandinista casualties are those inflicted solely by ground forces--that is by USMC patrols, combined USMC-GN patrols, or by GN patrols.

g. Includes "estimated" Sandinista casualties.

h. Does not include "estimated" Sandinista casualties.

i. Includes casualties inflicted by two USMC--volunteer contacts with the Sandinistas.

Sources: "Principal Engagements the Marine Detachments have had with Bandits in Nicaragua since May 15, 1927;" "Casualties in Nicaragua from December 23, 1926, to February 8, 1928;" monthly report on "Bandit Contacts in Nicaragua," from April, 1928, to November, 1932; "Marine Corps Casualties in Nicaragua: January 1, 1927, to January 2, 1933 (corrected copy)," all located in File "N," HQ, USMC; "Annual Report of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua for the Period Commencing October 1, 1931, and Ending September 30, 1932," Box 10, File Folder 14, FRC; and the "Official List of Contacts of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," printed in Smith, et al., Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional, pp. 302-407, passim.

Fig. 1.--Map of Nicaragua

Source: Bernard C. Nalty, The United St tes Marines in Nicaragua (rev. ed., 2nd reprint; Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1968).

APPENDIX III

Fig. 2.--Political/Military Departments of Nicaragua

Source: Julian C. Smith, et al., A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua (n.p., [1937]).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Material

U.S. Marine Corps. "Marine Corps Units in Nicaragua, 1927-1933." Boxes 9-13. Federal Record Center, Suitland, Md.

U.S. Marine Corps. Nicaragua Microfilm Reels. Twenty-three reels. Historical Division, Reference Section, Headquarters, USMC, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Marine Corps. Miscellaneous Records of Marine Corps Units in Nicaragua and of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua. Alphabetical File "N," Historical Division, Reference Section, Headquarters, USMC, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Government Publications

Miller, William M., and Johnstone, John H. A Chronology of the United States Marine Corps. Vol. I: 1775-1934. Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1965.

Nalty, Bernard C. The United States Marines in Nicaragua. Rev. ed. Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1961.

Smith, Julian C.; Leech, Lloyd L.; Chestham, Thomas, P.; Burwell, Edward L.; Fleming, H.M.H.; Williams, Gregon A.; Davis, Charles; and Krieger, Emil H. A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua. n.p., [1937].

U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Nicaragua: A Commercial and Economic Survey, by Harold Playter and Andrew J. McConnico, Trade Promotion Series No. 54. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927.

U.S. Department of the Navy. Annual Reports of the Navy Department, 1927-1932. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928-1933.

U.S. Department of State. A Brief History of the Relations Between the United States and Nicaragua, 1909-1928. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928.

U.S. Department of State. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923-1933. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938-1946, 1948, 1952.

U.S. Department of State. The United States and Nicaragua: A Survey of Relations from 1909 to 1932, Latin American Series, No. 6. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932.

Unpublished Manuscripts

Megee, Vernon Edgar. "United States Military Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-1932." Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Texas, 1963.

Millett, Richard Leroy. "The History of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1966.

Books

Beals, Carleton. Banana Gold. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1932.

Bemis, Samuel Flagg. The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1943.

Cox, Isaac Joslin. Nicaragua and the United States, 1909-1927. Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1927.

Denny, Harold Norman. Dollars for Bullets: The Story of American Rule in Nicaragua. New York: The Dial Press, 1929.

Goldwert, Marvin. The Constabulary in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua: Progeny and Legacy of United States Intervention. Latin American Monographs, No. 17. Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1961.

Havron, M. Dean; Chenault, William W.; Dodson, James M.; and Rambo, A. Terry. Constabulary Capabilities for Low Level Conflict. McLean, Va.: Human Sciences Research, Inc., 1969.

Heinl, Robert Debs, Jr. Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962. Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute. 1962

Kamman, William. A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy Toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Macaulay, Neill. The Sandino Affair. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967.

Metcalf, Clyde H. A History of the United States Marine Corps. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939.

Munro, Dana G. The United States and the Caribbean Area. Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934.

Pan American Union. Nicaragua, American Nation Series, No. 14. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927.

The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial Times to the Present. Stamford, Conn.: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., 1965.

Stimson, Henry L. American Policy in Nicaragua. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927.

Articles

Carter, C.B. "The Kentucky Feud in Nicaragua." World's Work, LIV, No. 3 (July, 1927), pp. 312-21.

Mahan, Alfred Thayar. "The Panama Canal and the Distribution of the Fleet." North American Review, CC, No. 706 (1914), pp. 406-17.

Tierney, John J., Jr. "U.S. Intervention in Nicaragua, 1927-1933: Lessons for Today." Orbis, XIV, No. 4 (1971), pp. 1012-1028.

"United States Trade with Latin America." Bulletin of the Pan American Union, LII, LIV, LVI, LVIII-LXI (1921-1927).

Thesis
G676 Gravatt
The Marines and the
Guardia Nacional de
Nicaragua 1927-1932.
147128

thesG676
The Marines and the Guardia Nacional de
3 2768 002 13847 1
DUDLEY KNOX LIBRARY